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# THE SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF MAHATMA GANDHI

*( In Two Volumes )*

VOLUME - II

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O R I S S A



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**THE SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI**

**(VOLUME-II)**





## CHAPTER 6

# BREAD LABOUR AND GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

### SOCIALISM AND LABOUR

Modern socialism that has arisen as a reaction to industrialism, is primarily a philosophy of labour. Since it arose as an offshoot of the Industrial and technological revolution that waxed at the expense of labour, and progressed and prospered by exploiting the labour and set before itself the objective of elimination of such exploitation and amelioration of the lot of the labourers, it is no exaggeration to say that socialism as a social doctrine is a philosophy of the labouring class. Engels has written : "Modern Socialism is in its essence, the direct product of the recognition on the one hand of the class antagonisms existing in the society of today between proprietors and non-proprietors, between capitalists and wage workers, on the other hand of the anarchy existing in production."<sup>1</sup> Socialism is not only a 'product of the recognition' of the antagonism that exists between the capitalists and the workers; it is also a conscious effort to even out the antagonism in favour of the labour in order to give him a distinct status and dignity in the society.

It is no denying the fact that Socialism is a science of a new society as well as the vision of a new civilisation;<sup>2</sup> yet the new society and the new civilisation whose governing principles are equality, fraternity and fellowship, shall be primarily concerned with tilting the balance in favour of the weak and the oppressed, the exploited and the lost and since the labour under industrial capitalism constitute such oppressed and the

exploited class, improvement of the lot of the labourers and elevation of their status constitute the very core of socialism. Therefore socialism, particularly socialism of the west, stands out as a doctrine that champions the claims of the labourers who are being exploited and on whose exploitation rest the property, prosperity and the privileges of the rest of the community. Labour thus occupy the same place in the doctrine of socialism as the Prince of Denmark in the play of Macbeth. This is true of both Utopian Socialism and Scientific Socialism.

Saint Simon, the Utopian Socialist, as a protagonist of Industrial Revolution and technological transformation, desired fusion of science and industry. Industrial and technological progress was inconceivable during his days without exploiting labourers; yet he was a champion of the cause of the workers as distinguished from "idlers" although the term "worker" used by him is more comprehensive, having a wider connotation than what it ordinarily signifies. As Engels has elaborated it : "The idlers were not merely the old privileged classes, but also all who without taking any part in production or distribution lived on their incomes. And the workers were not only the wage workers, but also the manufacturers, the merchants, the bankers."<sup>3</sup> However as a utopian socialist, in his vision of an egalitarian social order, St. Simon has assigned a dignified place to labour. Hence G.D.H. Cole has observed : "At the root of his doctrine was the notion that the essential task and duty of man was labour and that in the new social order, no respect would be paid to any man save in proportion to his service, through labour to the community."<sup>4</sup>

Although Charles Fourier moved in the reverse direction, was averse to industrialism and reposed his faith on agriculture and development of creative crafts and horticulture, his Phalansteres laid emphasis on work and the workers—the quality of work and the quality of life of the workers. The happiness of the worker or the labourer was his primary concern. Work according to him must be made interesting, attractive and satisfying, instead of being irksome and a source of frustration. Besides, satisfaction, he said, can be derived only from work. In engaging oneself in creative endeavour, one qualifies himself for maximum joy. His Phalansteres were intended to

provide opportunity for creative activity and maximum joy to the producer. As Cole has observed : "Fourier was not in the least interested in technology : he disliked large-scale production, mechanisation and centralisation, in all their forms. He believed in small communities as best for meeting the real needs of small-men."<sup>5</sup>

Robert Owen the philanthropic textile manufacturer and the Utopian Socialist who staked all his fortune and his entire future for the amelioration of the lot of the workers, made work and the working class the centre of his scheme of things and the core of his ideal social structure. He could not be contented in merely serving them; he recognised that they constitute the linchpin of the entire economic system and their status must be elevated. "The people" he said "were slaves at my mercy."<sup>6</sup> Speaking about the "new power" that remained behind the spectacular progress of his textile mill at New Lanark in Scotland he wrote : "This new power was the creation of the working class."<sup>7</sup>

Thus the Utopian Socialists considered labour as the centre of their doctrine. From the dignified place they assigned to labour in the economic system, proceeded their doctrine of exploitation, of labour and amelioration of their lot and promotion of their interest was uppermost in their minds. Hence as G.D.H. Cole is of opinion : "All three were deeply distrustful of politics and of politicians, and believed that the future control of social affairs should lie mainly not with parliaments or ministers but with the producers."<sup>8</sup> As he has further observed : "They all agreed that as things were, the workers were victims of exploitation; they all stood forth as advocates of what Saint Simon termed '*la classe la plus nombreuse et la plus pauvre*'."<sup>9</sup>

Marks and Engels the co-architects of Scientific Socialism became the champions of labour or the Proletariat in a far greater measure. The Communist Manifesto, their joint product, is primarily a manifesto of the Proletariat intended to be their hand-book and a guide for their revolution against the bourgeoisie. Marx borrowed the Labour Theory of Value from Adam Smith and Ricardo and made labour the source and measure of all values in order to finally prove that it is the labour or the Proletariat who should occupy a place of pre-

eminence in the society. According to Marx and Engels, "The proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class."<sup>10</sup> Their clarion-call therefore was to the working class. As they reiterated, "Workingmen of all countries, Unite."<sup>11</sup> They expected that the initiative in the social revolution leading to the establishment of an egalitarian society shall be taken by the Proletariat and the Proletariat shall seize the machinery of the state to stage the transformation. The Proletariat shall not take the initiative in the revolution and seize the political and economic power in the state on behalf of some other power, group, or a class and thus act as a cats-paw. After the revolution it shall make itself the master of the situation and the determinant of the destiny of the society. As they said : "The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the Proletariat become the ruling power after the revolution and during the transitional period—period between the overthrow of the bourgeois predominance and emergence of the class-less society--it plays a dominant role. The Proletariat during the transitional period embarks upon the process of elimination of bourgeois elements from the society, and ultimately the ~~society~~ as such consists only of the Proletariat, the only class that is left behind when the state as a political power "dies out". Thus Scientific Socialism revolves round labour or the Proletariat and encompasses its emancipation and elevation in the social and economic framework.

The Syndicalist and the Guild Socialist brand of socialism, also anchor their faith on labour and aspire for the amelioration of its lot. Like Marx and Engels the philosophers of Syndicalism and Guild Socialism felt concerned about the exploitation of labour by the capitalists and their primary concern was amelioration of the lot of the working class, improvement of their status, and their elevation to a position of dignity. The syndicalists who branded themselves as a 'new school' of socialists aspired to place the worker in an environment where highest manifestation of human personality and affirmation of his creative power and individual ingenuity become reality and they believed in an ideal of "free work in a free society".<sup>13</sup> The Guild Socialists proclaimed their objective as releasing the labourers from a state of bondage and state of wage-slavery. In their ideal

society the "labour will no longer be a commodity; the worker will no longer be a wage slave".<sup>14</sup> The degradation of labour resulting from the wage system where human beings are treated as commodities and are bought and sold "as a grocer sells butter"<sup>15</sup> and where the status of labour is "exactly that of manure"<sup>16</sup> has to be brought to an end.

Thus the modern socialists whether Utopian or Scientific, Marxian or Syndicalist or Guild Socialist, make labour their hero and champion its cause. Modern Socialism is therefore found to be labour-oriented. Although an egalitarian society inspired by the ideal of equality, fraternity and fellowship is the ultimate objective of socialism the greatest beneficiary according to all brands of modern socialism, shall be labour, the most underprivileged and exploited class in the society.

Gandhi made labour the core of his socialist thought. His public life and his struggle with the authorities started as much with his championship of the rights and privileges of indentured labourers in South Africa as with espousing the cause of the Indian settlers in general, and creation of the Natal Indian Congress. His first success in public life came with getting a release for Balsundaram in an indentured labourer, who was tortured and tormented by his white master. As Gandhi has himself acknowledged: "Balsundaram's case reached the ears of every indentured labourer and I came to be regarded as their friend. I hailed this connection with delight. A regular stream of indentured labourers began to pour into my office and I got the best opportunity of learning their joys and sorrows."<sup>17</sup>

On return to India, Gandhi made the cause of the textile-mill-workers of Ahmedabad his own. He had so much identified himself with the cause of the workers—on the issue of their wage increase—that even when the labourers were vacillating and were on the verge of retracing their steps and calling off their strike, Gandhi went on a fast to impress upon them the moral aspect of the problem and the legitimacy of the workers' demand for wage increase. As Gandhi said: "I cannot tolerate for a minute that you break your pledge. I shall not take any food nor use a car till you get 35 percent increase or all of you die in the fight for it."<sup>18</sup> When Ambalal Sarabhai on behalf of the Mill-owners conceded to the labourers' demand for 35% increase

in their salary provided Gandhi gave an undertaking not to champion their cause in future, Gandhi declined the offer. "It was impossible that Gandhiji who always fought at the dictates of his conscience, against injustice, moral turpitude, and exploitation would agree to abstain from serving labour for all time."<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi's programme of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, and particularly textiles, was primarily intended to come to the rescue of the textile workers of India who went without work because of import of foreign textiles. When Muriel Lester invited him to visit England, Gandhi said: "I will come to England if you can persuade the cotton spinners of Manchester not to ship any more of their manufactured goods to India."<sup>20</sup>

While Gandhi was in England in connection with the Round Table Conference a Lancashire worker wrote, "May I say or need I say that I as a Lancashire cotton working man, who is to some extent suffering through the action of the Indian Congress leaders have a profound admiration for Mr. Gandhi and a great many of my fellow workers share that spirit of admiration for him?"<sup>21</sup> Gandhi on his part wrote in the *Harijan*: "You will perhaps be surprised to know that even labourers in Lancashire instinctively recognised me as one of themselves, and flocked around me in hundreds and thousands."<sup>22</sup>

Thus Gandhi was a comrade of the working people or labourers and he championed their cause throughout his life. As Gandhi has written: "You may know if you do not know already that I have been closely associated with labourers ever since I went to South Africa. In India or whatever part of the world, they have recognised me as a fellow labourer and received me as one of themselves."<sup>23</sup> He so much identified himself with the hopes and aspirations of the workers that he claimed to be a "foundation member" of the workers' republic.<sup>24</sup> But more than that, Gandhi considered labour as the very source of life and the basis of human existence, and elevated it to the status of a great equaliser, a panacea for effecting social transformation in the direction of an egalitarian social order.

Marx and Engels the co-architects of Scientific Socialism made labour the source and measure of all values. In going to the very root of the commodities Marx wrote: "If then we leave out of consideration the use-value of commodities, they have only one common property left that of being products of

labour.”<sup>25</sup> Speaking about the exchange value of two commodities he carried on : “The value of one commodity is to the value of any other as the labour time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other.”<sup>26</sup>

But Marx adopted this labour theory of value to prove his theory of capitalistic exploitation. That Labour is the very source of all values and is at the root of all productivity directly proves that the prosperity of the capitalists or the bourgeoisie is based on the exploitation of the labour and the deprivation of the latter of their rightful due. Thus the labour theory of value is meant to reveal the essence of the theory of surplus value and capitalistic exploitation. But the theory by itself is not an adequate solvent of the problem of exploitation and existing disparity in the society. To put an end to exploitation, to give a go by to the inegalitarian society, Marx and Engels devised the theory of violent upsurge of forcible seizure of political and economic power by the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. For the resurgence of the proletariat, for their deliverance from a state of economic exploitation and wage slavery, uncertainty and unemployment, deprivation and starvation, the device of dissolution of the existing socio-economic order was visualised. Only a “violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie” shall lay “the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.”<sup>27</sup> Dissolution is thus the cause-way according to Marx, to the emergence of an egalitarian social order.

But Gandhi went a step ahead. He treated labour as the root of the entire creation, the source of all material values and even the appropriate apparatus for socialistic transformation. For elaborating his thesis Gandhi adopted the theory of Bread Labour and this theory along with his concept of Trusteeship became the panacea for the establishment of an egalitarian society. As Gandhi writes : “Invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when everyone without exception acknowledged the obligation of bread labour.”<sup>28</sup> Not only Gandhi was convinced that the distinction of rank as prevalent in India shall be resolved by the adoption of this apparatus of Bread Labour; even the perpetual conflict between the capitalists and the labourers or the Bourgeoisie and the proletariat, that has assumed world dimensions can also be resolved by the



application of this apparatus.<sup>29</sup> As he said, "If this principle is observed everywhere, all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from many a sin."<sup>30</sup>

### MEANING AND NATURE OF BREAD LABOUR

The Gandhian concept of Bread Labour implies that each individual in order to earn his livelihood must perform sufficient labour. No body who does not perform sufficient labour has a right to collect his food or subsistence from the society. One's subsistence shall be therefore directly connected with labour or in other words one's bread shall be connected with one's labour or shall be a product of one's labour. Thus an indissoluble bond binds bread and labour and bread is inconceivable without labour. Every individual therefore shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. As Gandhi wrote in *Young India* on November 5, 1925 : "Just as both prince and peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so must both labour for supplying their primary wants." Labour is thus the only passport to earn one's bread and he who does not work, has no right to his bread, and if he collects his bread without adequate labour, he is in the nature of a usurper, a thief and an exploiter. Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, "The rule should be 'No labour, no meal'."<sup>31</sup>

Gandhi was a friend of the poor and the down-trodden and a champion of their cause. His supreme deity was "Daridra-narayan", the semi-naked and semi-starved millions, on whose altar he made complete self-sacrifice and self-surrender. But he was not prepared to compromise his principle that no body would get his food without rendering sufficient labour in return even in favour of this *Daridranarayan*, and he would rather see them starve than collecting food without work or through beggary or living on anybody's charity. Accordingly he wrote : "My friendship for them must be a sorry affair if I could be satisfied with a large part of humanity being reduced to beggary. Little did my friends know that my friendship for the pauper of India has made me heart-hearted enough to contemplate their utter starvation with equanimity in preference to their utter reduction to beggary."<sup>32</sup>

Gandhi believed that all able-bodied individuals must earn

their bread by the sweat of their brow and he was not prepared to accept any compromise. Hence he wrote, "The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food."<sup>33</sup> The case may be different with the sickly, disabled, incapacitated and the weak who are incapable of rendering any labour. But no body with sound physique or mental condition capable of performing some labour should shirk work and by shirking, one disqualifies himself for a living. Even though Gandhi was an advocate of universal love and compassion for the suffering, and an apostle of non-violence, he would rather allow the able-bodied individuals to die of starvation rather than acquiring one's living without any labour. He considered any charity-feeding of able-bodied men with good health as undesirable and a social crime. As he wrote : "My Ahimsa would not tolerate the idea of giving a free meal to a healthy person who has not worked for it in some honest way and if I had the power I would stop every Sadavrat where free meals are given. It has degraded the nation and has encouraged laziness, idleness, hypocrisy and even crime. Such misplaced charity adds nothing to the wealth of the country, whether material or spiritual, and gives a false sense of meritoriousness to the donor."<sup>34</sup>

Bread Labour, according to Gandhi, is therefore the ideal that should inspire and guide every able-bodied and healthy individual. This ideal may not be realised in full by all; all may not be able to collect their food in exchange of labour. Some may be parasites by choice depending upon others' labour; others may be well-intentioned persons, ready to work but lack the opportunity for such labour. All the same, Gandhi considered bread-labour as the ideal and the golden rule. As he wrote in the Harijan : "I have never imagined that every man on earth, will earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but I have simply enunciated the golden rule."<sup>35</sup>

Gandhi was conscious that he himself was not doing sufficient bread labour or his bread was not a product of labour that he was capable of doing. But he did not exonerate him from criticism and considered himself a parasite falling short of the ideal. Hence he said about himself : "I do not give enough labour. That is also one of the reasons why I consider myself as living upon charity."<sup>36</sup> Later on, Gandhi said that people like him who fell short of the ideal and got their bread

without earning it in return for labour deserved pity and condemnation. As he wrote : "I may not be able to earn what fruit and milk I eat by mere labour, but that means that I am to be pitied."<sup>37</sup> Gandhi had so tightly fastened his thought process to the concept of Bread Labour that he believed that if this concept is accepted as the guiding principle by all individuals, a heaven may descend upon earth or all the problems of mundane world may be solved without much effort. Accordingly he said : "If every body lived by the sweat of his brow, the earth would become a paradise."<sup>38</sup>

But the term Bread Labour had far greater and deeper significance for Gandhi than the mere fact that all need work before laying their claim on food. His emphasis was not only on labour as such as against idleness but on body-labour, manual-labour or physical-labour. Each individual in order to live a life of purity and honesty must earn his living by physical labour. Intellectual labour or white-collar job does not entitle one according to Gandhi, to earn his upkeep. Thus manual labour and bread are intimately related. Speaking about their relationship Gandhi wrote in 'Young India' : "It (Bread Labour) means that every one is expected to perform sufficient body labour in order to entitle him to it (to his bread)."<sup>39</sup>

Manual labour during Gandhi's time—no less in our own time—was being looked down upon with contempt and manual labourers like farmers in the fields or workers in the factories were treated as sub-human beings by the white collar workers, the officers or the bureaucrats. The intellectuals or the white-collar workers—doctors, engineers, professors, bureaucrats or business executives—claimed for themselves, higher pay, better amenities and superior social status, and constituted themselves as a privileged class claiming their work to be of better quality and of higher social significance. As Gandhi felt "the rich and the so-called higher classes despise body-labour."<sup>40</sup>

Gandhi joined issue with those who held the brief on behalf of the intellectual labourers, who in turn not only claim a right to their livelihood by virtue of intellectual labour, but very often claim and often acquire much more than what is necessary for their survival and claim and occupy privileged status in the society. Gandhi wrote in the Harijan : "May

not men earn their bread by intellectual labour ? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. 'Render Unto Caesar that which is Caesar's' perhaps applied here well."<sup>41</sup>

Gandhi did not relegate intellectual labour to the background and did not treat it with contempt or as of second rate importance. Intellectual labour has its place in the society and people engaged in intellectual labour shall no doubt occupy important places in the society. But inspite of its importance, intellectual work does not entitle one to lay his claim on his living or to get his bread. Even people engaged in the highest type of intellectual labour must contribute their portion of body labour to earn their living Accordingly Gandhi wrote : "Let me not be misunderstood. I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which everyone of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food though far superior to the grains we eat never can be a substitute for them."<sup>42</sup>

Thus every individual, whatever may be his intellectual attainment must engage himself in some physical or manual labour to earn his upkeep. Arguing his point further Gandhi felt that intellectual labour may be satisfying to the intellect or the soul, but for the same, the individuals engaged in such labour need not demand any payment or compensation. For the sake of the same, Gandhi would not allow any lawyer, doctor, engineer, scientist, professor, poet or playwright to receive payment for his intellectual labour. He shall have to engage himself in some sort and some amount of bodily labour apart from his intellectual labour to earn his upkeep. Hence Gandhi wrote in the Harijan : "Mere mental, that is intellectual labour is for the soul, and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers, and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self"<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi did not under-rate the importance of intellectual labour nor did he consider it as an appendage of the bodily labour. What he really meant by his advocacy of the concept of Bread Labour is that bodily labour is in no way inferior to intellectual labour or mental work. What is more significant, he

forged an indissoluble bond between intellectual development and bodily labour which he called Bread Labour. Intellectual development according to him is inconceivable without bodily labour and only adequate bodily labour can ensure balanced mental and intellectual development. The divorce between bodily labour and intellectual development has been rejected by Gandhi as that shall engineer incalculable harm to real mental and intellectual development. Accordingly he said : "Even for real intellectual development one should engage in some useful bodily activity."<sup>44</sup>

Gandhi was conscious that the work-oriented and particularly the manual-work-oriented life of his Ashrams was a subject-matter of ridicule for the white collar, bureaucratic and pseudo-intellectual labourers who thrive on the labour of others. Therefore he came out with a defence for the manual labour and wrote : "People often say that in an institution like the Ashram, where body labour is given pride of place, there is no scope for intellectual development, but my experience, is just the reverse. Every one who has been to the Ashram has made intellectual progress also; I know of none who was the worse on account of a sojourn in the Ashram."<sup>45</sup>

Real intellectual refinement according to Gandhi comes not from mere reading, gathering of information, idle speculation or unproductive contemplation, but from study combined with bodily labour and the exercise of different limbs of the body. Accordingly he wrote : "I hold true education of the intellect, can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g., hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc."<sup>46</sup>

Gandhi was conscious that the advocates of the superiority of intellectual labour may sometimes argue that manual or bodily labour, however necessary for intellectual development of ordinary mortals, is not essential for great intellectuals or in other words such intellectuals may be made free from the obligation of bodily labour. They may argue that bodily labour by such great intellectuals will not only be a waste of effort on their part; it will put unnecessary strain on their intellectual development and impede their natural intellectual growth. They may further argue that intellectual development of such potential intellectual giants may be stunted and the society may ultimately be deprived of their

contribution and be poorer to that extent. When a question was put to Gandhi why intellectual giants such as Rabindranath or C. V. Raman shall engage themselves in bodily labour and thereby withdraw themselves from the most creative enterprises that shall involve a positive loss to the society, Gandhi replied : "Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output."<sup>47</sup> During the course of his controversy with Rabindranath Tagore on the issue of performance of physical labour by each individual, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* on November 5, 1925 : "If the Poet span half an hour daily his poetry would gain in richness."

Thus intellectual culture and bodily labour according to Gandhi are inseparable and the latter improves the quality and texture of the former. Any attempt to separate the two or to think of intellectual development short of bodily labour is doomed to failure. Any divorce of intellectual labour from bodily labour shall pull down the quality of the former. Gandhi therefore pointed out : "They tried to do it in ancient Rome and failed miserably. Culture without labour or culture which is not the fruit of labour would be 'Vonatoria' as a Roman Catholic writer says. The Romans made indulgence a habit and were ruined. Man can not develop his mind, by simply writing and reading or making speeches all day long."<sup>48</sup> Even citing his own example Gandhi said : "And though I have worked physically for days and months for eight hours, on end I don't think I suffered from mental decay. I have often walked as much as 40 miles a day and yet never felt dull."<sup>49</sup> Gandhi even felt that great men like Buddha would have done better and rendered better and greater service to humanity had they advocated association of work with intellectual development or integration of intellectual and bodily work.<sup>50</sup>

Besides, Gandhi who was concerned with the welfare of all and all-round welfare of all or cultivation of both intellectual faculties and physical vigour of each individual, laid as much emphasis on body labour as on intellectual labour; rather his emphasis is on balanced or an integrated growth of all the faculties of the individual and he felt shy of championing

intellectual development at the cost of the development of the body or improvement of the quality of the soul. Hence he said : "A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore can take place only when it proceeds, *paripassu* with the education of physical, and spiritual faculties, of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole."<sup>51</sup>

Thus a 'perfect, well-balanced, and all-round development of each individual requires development of body, soul and mind. Mere development of intellectual faculties without spiritual and physical development would make development of human personalities lop-sided. As he said : "Man is neither mere intellect, nor a gross animal body, nor the hearts or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man, and constitutes the true economics of education."<sup>52</sup>

Thus Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour gives a status to body labour that is in no way inferior to the status of intellectual labour. Rather there is so much emphasis on body labour, that body labour appears to be more important than the intellectual labour. He was so much a champion of body labour that he said : "I should never be satisfied until all men had plenty of productive work, say eight hours a day."<sup>53</sup> He would even turn down the philanthropy of those who would offer to provide all the needs of recipients who would agree to disengage themselves from all types of body labour in future. Of course Gandhi would say so because that shall impair the self-respect of the recipients and to that extent hinder the balanced growth of their personality. At the same time he would reject the offer because that would compromise his theory of Bread Labour or special emphasis on body labour. As he wrote : "No, not only because of that (self-respect) but specially because it strikes at the root of the fundamental law of our being, viz. that we must work for our bread, that we eat our bread by the sweat of our brow."<sup>54</sup>

### SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Although the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour appears as an equivalent of the Marxian emphasis on labour and labour theory of value, yet Bread Labour as a concept had nothing to

do with the Marxian labour theory of value. Gandhi made a systematic study of the Marxian literature, very late in his life and as late as nineteen forties,<sup>55</sup> but long before it, the term Bread Labour had gained currency in Gandhian thought, speeches, and writings.<sup>56</sup>

As Gandhi has acknowledged, his concept of Bread Labour is a composite product of the influences of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau, and the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible. As he has written in his autobiography : "Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life, and captivated me : Ray Chandbhai by his living contact, Tolstoy by his book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*."<sup>57</sup> In respect of his concept of Bread Labour he was no doubt influenced by Tolstoy and Ruskin, but he went far beyond their influences for the maturity of this concept. As Gandhi has written : "The law that to live, man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on Bread Labour. But even before that I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. . . . In my view the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean bread labour. . . . In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat, thy bread says the Bible."<sup>58</sup>

Besides, in respect of this concept, the impact of Thoreau's emphasis on body labour can also be traced.

#### (a) Tolstoy

Although Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau are the three distinguished intellectuals who profoundly influenced Gandhi's thought process, he came in contact with Tolstoy's ideas relatively earlier. When Gandhi visited Paris in 1890 to witness the Great Exhibition held there, he became conscious of the disparaging remark of Tolstoy about the Eiffel Tower.<sup>59</sup> During his first year in South Africa, he read the most celebrated works of Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, *The Gospel in Brief* and *What to Do*.<sup>60</sup> That Gandhi was influenced by the social philosophy of Tolstoy is therefore no wonder. But Tolstoy considered bread labour or bodily labour as the key for the solution of the problems of social inequality and economic exploitation and since it was the speciality of Tolstoy to practise



what he preached<sup>61</sup> he also experimented this philosophy of bread labour in his own life. Gandhi wrote to Tolstoy on October 1, 1909 : "I had the privilege of studying your writings . . . which left a deep impression on my mind."<sup>62</sup> Speaking about Bread Labour Gandhi said : "The law that to live man must work, first came to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on Bread Labour."<sup>63</sup>

Apart from his writings, Tolstoy's life dedicated to the philosophy of bread-labour must have exerted sufficient influence on Gandhi in shaping his concept of Bread Labour. Tolstoy belonged to the Russian nobility who inherited vast landed estate, fabulous wealth and enormous opportunities for leading a life of luxury. During his youth, he lived a life of power, drunkenness and debauchery: As Gandhi has written about Tolstoy : "In those days, like the other noblemen of his time he used to enjoy all the pleasures of the world, kept mistresses, drank and was strongly addicted to smoking."<sup>64</sup> Not only he lived a parasitic life natural to the nobility and the landed aristocracy; according to his own confession, there was no vice from which he was away. "I killed men in war and challenged men to duels in order to kill them. I lost at cards, consumed the labour of the peasants, sentenced them to punishments, lived loosely and deceived people, lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder, there was no crime I did not commit."<sup>65</sup>

Tolstoy was conscious that he had been blessed with a loving wife and children and considered from the worldly standard, a happy family life. He had acquired high social status and wide reputation. He had been endowed with intellectual brilliance and physical vigour that was almost rare among the nobility. But such a life of affluence, leisure, comforts and luxuries, of idleness and amusements, was far from satisfying to him. He somehow felt tired of this life of futile and pointless existence, a life devoid of work and productivity. He was so much overwhelmed by scepticism and cynicism that at one stage he even thought of committing suicide. "And to rid myself of the terror" says Tolstoy, "I wished to kill myself."<sup>66</sup> But he discovered that the labourers and the poor peasants who were engaged in heavy toil were pulsating with real life full of happiness and contentment.

In drawing a contrast between the life of inactivity, idleness, leisure, comforts and luxuries of the nobility on the one hand and the life dedicated to heavy toil on the other, Tolstoy preferred a life full of work to one full of leisure and parasitism. As he has written in his confession : "It came about that the life of our circle, the rich and learned, not merely became distasteful to me but lost all meaning in my eyes. All our action, discussions, science and art, presented itself to me in a new light. I understood that it is all merely self-indulgence, and that to find a meaning in it is impossible; while the life of the whole labouring people, the whole of mankind, who produce life appeared to me in its true significance. I understood that, that is life itself and that the meaning given to that life is true and I accepted it."<sup>67</sup> He further added, "if one is to think and speak of the life of mankind, one must think and speak of that life and not of the life of some of life's parasites."<sup>68</sup>

Thus Tolstoy came to the conclusion that real life, a life of undiluted and unbroken happiness can be lived not by parasites who live upon other's work and other's labour but by the people who work and are engaged in unremitting toil. The essence of life according to him is therefore work, and life acquires meaning and significance by a sense of involvement in work. As man must earn his living by work, no honest life is conceivable without work. Even the animals like birds, beasts and insects earn their living by work thereby proving the irrevocability of the concept of work preceding any life and existence. Accordingly Tolstoy has written in his *Confession* : "And indeed a bird is so made that it must fly, collect food, and build a nest and when I see that a bird does this I have pleasure in its joy. A goat, a hare and a wolf are so made that they must feed themselves and must breed and feed their family, and when they do so, I feel firmly assured that they are happy and that their life is a reasonable one. Then what should a man do ? He too should produce his living as the animals do . . . And when he does that I have a firm assurance, that he is happy, and that his life is reasonable."<sup>69</sup>

Tolstoy was conscious that mankind constitute a species that is different from and superior to ordinary animals, insects, beasts and birds. But this superiority lay not in idleness, parasitism and exploitation of others, and living on

the labour of others but in engaging oneself in work for producing apart for oneself "for all".<sup>70</sup> He considered his own life a rotten and lost one that deserved to be despised and pitied since it was a life based on parasitism. According to him "the meaning of human life lies in supporting it"<sup>71</sup> or self-reliance is the root of life. He felt that "man's first and most unquestionable duty is to participate in the struggle with nature to support his own life and that of others."<sup>72</sup>

Thus Tolstoy felt that work or labour is the essence of life and each individual shall support himself by his work or one's subsistence shall be earned in exchange of work. If somebody remains idle he forfeits his right to livelihood. One's subsistence follows automatically from his work and if somebody stops working, the flow of subsistence shall also cease. Hence Tolstoy firmly believed that work and subsistence are intimately and indissolubly related and one can not conceive of the latter without a reference to the former. Later Tolstoy wrote in his *What I Believe* : "One must return to the conception natural to all unperverted people, that the necessary condition of happiness for man is not idleness, but work, that a man can not reject work, that not to work is dull, wearisome and hard, as it is dull and hard for an ant, a horse or any other animal not to work."<sup>73</sup>

Tolstoy therefore was convinced that man must work in order to earn his bread. He may, by virtue of his work, earn bread for others, his neighbours and the humanity at large, but to acquire one's bread without sufficient labour or work was considered a sin by Tolstoy and as going against the Divine law. "In a word man does not live that others should work for him, but that he should work for others."<sup>74</sup> Further he wrote : "Work is a necessary condition of man's life."<sup>75</sup> As he wrote in *What Then Must We Do ?* "It is shameful, uncomfortable and impossible to go on eating and not to work; that to eat and not to work is a most dangerous condition, resembling a conflagration."<sup>76</sup>

Tolstoy not merely advocated that the essence of life is work, life is impossible without work, and happiness is inconceivable without labour; he also gave priority to manual work or body labour over intellectual labour or the so-called intellectual labour of the officers, judges, governors or ministers.

In the language of Tolstoy : "So it is with physical labour. It is man's dignity, his sacred duty and obligation to use the hands and feet given him for the purpose for which they were given and to expend the food he consumes on labour to produce food and not to let them atrophy nor to wash them and clean them and use them only to put food, drink and cigarettes into his own mouth."<sup>77</sup> He felt, real happiness is intimately associated not only with work but with manual work or physical labour. As Tolstoy has written : "Another undoubted condition of happiness is work in the first place voluntary work which one is fond of and secondly physical work which gives one an appetite and sound restful sleep."<sup>78</sup>

Thus for sound health that is a condition for real happiness, physical labour has been considered as indispensable by Tolstoy. Speaking about his own experience with physical labour Tolstoy says : "The harder I worked, the stronger, fitter, happier and kindlier did I feel."<sup>79</sup> Speaking about the effect of physical labour in general he recommended : "In the first place the simplest and most certain result will be that you will be merrier, healthier, fitter, and kindlier, and will learn what real life is."<sup>80</sup> He despised the life of those so-called fortunate people who lived either a leisurely life free from work or any kind of physical labour. He pointed out that most of them suffered from various ailments because of lack of physical labour. As he has written : "All the fortunate ones of the world, the men in important places and the rich live like prisoners quite deprived of work and vainly struggling with diseases that arise, from the absence of physical labour and still more vainly with the ennui which overcomes them."<sup>81</sup> Thus he idealised the life of manual workers and people engaged in physical labour. Intellectual labour, the labour of bankers, officers, public prosecutors, governors or ministers was held at a discount instead of being assigned special importance and attention.

Not only Tolstoy held at a discount intellectual labour or work of the educated men like officers, ministers, men of science and arts, and men engaged in church services; he considered such work as most unproductive and treated men engaged in such work as those "who produce nothing, palpable or useful to the people".<sup>82</sup> He felt that the educated classes

performing no useful work were enjoying additional privileges from the society under the cover of a false philosophy of division of labour. As he said : "We . . . as a result of an imaginary division of labour allowing us not only to dine first and then work, but allowing whole generations to eat well without producing anything."<sup>83</sup>

Such persons felt Tolstoy do not earn any title to their livelihood by mere intellectual labour. The intellectual labour or the services of the scientists or men of art, should be rendered to the society, with a real spirit of service without expecting any thing in return; rather men of science and arts should be prepared to suffer during the course of rendering such service to the society. As Tolstoy felt :

"Scientific and artistic activity in its real sense is only fruitful when it ignores rights and knows only duties. Only because it is always of that kind and its nature is to be self-sacrificing does humanity value this activity so highly.

"Men who are really called to serve others by mental labour will always suffer in performing that service for only by suffering as by birth pangs, is the spiritual world brought to birth.

"Self-sacrifice and suffering will be the lot of a thinker and an artist because their aim is the welfare of man."<sup>84</sup>

Hence Tolstoy's dictum was that all intellectual workers must perform bodily labour in order to earn their living. Citing his own example he posed the issue, "What must I do who am such a perverted man ?" The answer comes : "Try first of all to feed yourself honestly, that is to say learn not to live on the backs of others; and while learning that, and after learning it, take every opportunity to serve others with hands, feet, brain, heart and all the powers you possess."<sup>85</sup>

Tolstoy was convinced that physical labour by intellectual workers would not adversely affect either the quantity or quality of their intellectual pursuits. He felt that out of 24 hours if five hours a day are devoted to intellectual work, one "will get through an immense amount". Besides the quality of intellectual labour will improve in direct proportion to the physical labour performed. Speaking from his own experience he said : "The energy of my mental work increased—and

emancipation from all superfluity . . . It turned out that physical labour far from rendering mental work impossible improved and aided it . . . . the more intensive the labour and the nearer it approached to rough work on the land, the more enjoyment and information I obtained and the closer and more amiable was the intercourse I had with men, and the more happiness life brought me.”<sup>86</sup>

Thus Tolstoy’s concept of Bread Labour implies that the intellectual workers should not be free from the obligation of physical labour. Besides, intellectual labourers shall not only engage themselves in some form of physical labour to earn their living; they will not claim a standard of living higher than that of people engaged in physical labour. As he said : “Service of the people by sciences and arts will only exist when men live with the people and as the people live and without presenting any claims will offer their scientific and artistic services, which the people will be free to accept or decline as they please.”<sup>87</sup>

### **(b) Ruskin**

Apart from Tolstoy’s life and writings another most potent factor that profoundly influenced Gandhi’s concept of Bread Labour is the philosophy of Ruskin contained in his book *Unto This Last*. Of course Gandhi read Tolstoy’s writings much earlier than he read Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*.<sup>88</sup> *The Gospel in Brief* and *What Then Must We Do* of Tolstoy are positive pleas in favour of Bread Labour. Hence it is quite natural to believe that the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour derived its primary inspiration from the writings of Tolstoy. But Gandhi while acknowledging that the law that to live, man must work, first came home to him upon reading Tolstoy’s writings on Bread Labour, claims that even before that he had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*.<sup>89</sup> However it will be more accurate to say that Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* had as much to contribute to the development of the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour as that of the writings of Tolstoy.

Ruskin’s fundamental thesis as contained in the *Unto This Last* is a fervent plea for the creation of an economic environment, an atmosphere of honesty, and “certain moral conditions

of society" that shall produce "as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, happy-hearted human creatures", and nourish "the greatest number of noble and happy human beings".<sup>90</sup> However emphasis on Bread Labour, or that man shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, is not distinctly discernible in the pages of *Unto This Last*, although the creed of the Guild of St. George founded by Ruskin and run on socialist lines was "I will labour with such strength and opportunity as God gives me for my daily bread; and all that my hand finds to do."<sup>91</sup> As Ruskin has himself made it clear in his book, "The subject of the organisation of labour is only casually touched upon."<sup>92</sup> But Gandhi while preparing a paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in the concluding paragraph has written, "This is not a time for self-indulgence but for each of us to labour according to our capacity. If one man lives in idleness, another has to put in a double amount of work. This is at the root of the distress of the poor in England."<sup>93</sup>

Thus after reading *Unto This Last* Gandhi was convinced of the need that one must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow or by performing Bread Labour. Hence speaking about the messages of *Unto This Last* he says that one of them was "that a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicrafts man, is the life worth living."<sup>94</sup> What is very much significant, as per his claim, this had never occurred to him earlier and the reading of the *Unto This Last* made it for him as clear as day light.<sup>95</sup> Thus on his own admission, a study of *Unto This Last* made a major contribution to Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour.

Even if the doctrine that one must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, is not categorically and explicitly conveyed through the pages of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin quite unequivocally and unambiguously puts his weight on the side that "all labour ought to be paid by an invariable standard".<sup>96</sup> Equality of wage was advocated on the ground that wage earners inspite of the difference in the physical or mental capacity have identical basic needs and such basic needs of all the individuals must be met. He did not distinguish between qualities of labour. Good or bad, all the labourers deserve, according to Ruskin, identical treatment. As he argued: "You pay with equal fee contentedly, the good and bad workmen upon your soul and

the good and bad workmen upon your body; much more may you pay, contentedly, with equal fees, the good and bad workmen upon your house.”<sup>97</sup> Further as he felt, “This equality of wages, then . . . the first object towards which we have to discover the road.”<sup>98</sup>

Ruskin did not accord a higher place to intellectual labour over manual labour, nor did he feel that there is any justification for paying the intellectual profession a higher wage than the manual labourers. As Ruskin felt, whether a pastor, or physician, a lawyer, or a merchant, he need not be paid a wage higher than the other categories of labour because “the duty of all these men is, on due occasion to die for it”<sup>99</sup>, and not to claim a higher reward for their work. Their primary consideration should be service and not reward nor special treatment nor even additional facilities. Remuneration, adequate enough for their existence, may be paid to them and perhaps Ruskin would say, should be paid to them. But that does not justify special treatment to them or award of additional reward. As he has written : “The stipend is a due and necessary adjunct but not the object, of his life, if he be a true clergyman, any more than his fee (or honorarium) is the object of life to a true physician. Neither is his fee the object of life to a true merchant. All three if true men, have a work to be done irrespective of fee—to be done even at any cost or for quite the contrary of fee; the pastor’s function being to teach the physician’s to heal and the merchant’s to provide.”<sup>100</sup>

Gandhi after going through Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* has written that one of the teachings of the book was that “a lawyer’s work has the same value, as the barber’s inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.”<sup>101</sup> Under the impact of Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* he equally believed that differential wage should not be paid for intellectual work in preference to manual work since intellectual labour should not be treated as superior to manual labour.

### (c) Thoreau

Thoreau’s writings that profoundly influenced Gandhi’s philosophy of life and action must have also influenced his concept of Bread Labour. Thoreau was one of the greatest intellectuals that U.S.A. has so far produced. A graduate of



Harvard University who knew Greek, Latin, French and German, was as well-versed in the religions and philosophies of the East as of the West, interested in Poetry, and tried his luck in teaching, he was also a believer in the philosophy that one must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow or manual or physical labour. Of course he has written quite jestingly, "It is not necessary that a man should earn his living by the sweat of his brow unless he sweats easier than I do."<sup>102</sup> But he was a firm believer in the philosophy that one must earn his living by his own labour. As he was convinced that the life of a labourer was a worthy life, he was full of admiration for the same. As he has written, "It certainly is fair to look at that class by whose labour the works which distinguish this generation are accomplished."<sup>103</sup> He has further written: "For myself I found that the occupation of a day labourer was the most independent of any, especially as it required only thirty or forty days in a year to support one."<sup>104</sup> Hence it has been written about him, "He enjoyed activity and could not understand people who disliked work. He thought work was the proper activity of a man."<sup>105</sup>

Thoreau was not happy with the men of liberal professions who according to him live parasitical life. He was critical of the Professors who professed and practised according to him every thing but the "art of life". An intellectual he felt should not only "survey the world through a telescope or a microscope" or "study chemistry"; he should also learn "how his bread is made" and "how it is earned".<sup>106</sup> He considered the idle life of the intellectuals uninspiring, devoid of bodily labour. As he posed the problem: "How long shall we sit in our porticos practising idle and musty virtues, which any work would make impertinent? As if one were to begin the day with long suffering and hire a man to hoe his potatoes, and in the afternoon go forth to practise, christian meekness and charity with goodness aforethought! Consider the China pride and stagnant self-complacency of mankind."<sup>107</sup> Thus Thoreau was an advocate of the philosophy that one must earn his living by honest bodily labour.

Thoreau not only preached this philosophy; he practised it in his own life. He at one stage earned his upkeep by manufacturing pencil in his father's firm. He built his own house in

the vicinity of the Walden Pond. Not only he cultivated the ground, prepared the field, and produced foodstuffs like beans, potatoes, etc.; he fell trees, prepared firewood, cooked his own food and made his own furniture.

Thus Thoreau was convinced that every one should earn his bread by his own labour. His very thesis that one can produce his own food for the year only by working for six weeks is a hint that earning one's bread by physical labour is a philosophy that covers even intellectuals. Intellectuals should not only be not free from such labour—after performance of such physical labour there will be enough time left for intellectual pursuits.

Hence Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour must have been influenced by Thoreau's life and philosophy.

#### (d) The Bible

That the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin left an indelible impression on the life and philosophy of Gandhi can be explained by the fact that both the inspirers of Gandhi were true Christians who preached and lived the life advocated in the *Sermon on the Mount*. Gandhi became acquainted with the *New Testament* and the *Sermon on the Mount* before he came across *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and other books of Tolstoy and *Unto This Last* of Ruskin. As for his own claim, when he read the *New Testament* and the *Sermon on the Mount*, it straight went into his heart.<sup>108</sup> Since the life, philosophy and writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin reflected the message contained in the *New Testament* and the *Sermon on the Mount*, they had a deeper appeal for Gandhi. But apart from other things the emphasis of the *New Testament* and the *Sermon on the Mount* is on work. The message is never one of idleness or exploitation but work and performance of one's duty. One in order to live, must work, and thereby earn his bread, instead of living upon other's labour and thus becoming a parasite. As Jesus Christ said: "Come to me all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy, and I will give you relief."<sup>109</sup>

Even Jesus himself did not claim freedom from work for his own sustenance. Thus even superhuman forces, and people who are considered sons of God, can not live on charity. Once his disciples were in a dilemma as to the source from which his food was being collected and even suspected that perhaps

Jesus was living on some body's charity. He replied categorically that his food was being derived from the fulfilment of his duties that God had assigned him or from due performance of work. As he said : "It is meat and drink for me to do the will of him who sent me until I have finished his work."<sup>110</sup>

Even if God the universal father, is conceived as kind-hearted enough to make provision for everybody, and every living being, one shall have to qualify for such love and charity by ministering oneself to His designs by way of engaging oneself in efforts and in performing one's assigned duties. Even if God's grace is profusely available, one shall have to make sufficient effort to collect such grace. As Tolstoy interpreted it : "Our life is a field God has sown, and our business is to gather its fruits. If we gather its fruits we receive the reward of a life beyond time. . . And if we labour to gather in life then like harvest-men we receive a reward."<sup>111</sup>

As is evident from Jesus's advice to the man who waited by the side of the pool for thirty-eight years to be redeemed, to be relieved of his sufferings, Jesus Christ wanted that every body must be self-reliant and should not wait for the charity or benevolence of others. One must work out his own solution and make efforts for his own relief. As Jesus Christ advised : "Rise to your feet take up your bed and walk."<sup>112</sup>

As Tolstoy understood the message of the *New Testament*, the Kingdom of God can be realised by the fulfilment of His will and "that fulfilment depends on each man's efforts".<sup>113</sup> As is further evident from the parable of the rich man, who gave away "ten cities" and "five cities" to the two slaves who worked and earned during his absence and took away the pound from the slave who remained idle and did not work during the absence of his master<sup>114</sup> the burden of the philosophy of Jesus Christ is work and nobody can nor should prosper without work. Prosperity is the reward for work and not a product of exploitation. As Tolstoy understood it : "Each to work by himself"<sup>115</sup>, to earn his living.

The *New Testament* not only conveys the message of work for the sake of earning one's living and earning prosperity; there is equal emphasis on sacrifice of the body for the sake of real happiness and real enjoyment. The flesh and the blood need not be sacrificed and there should be sublimation of flesh

and blood for the sake of real happiness. Jesus Christ was prepared to sacrifice his body, flesh and blood so that his disciples can have eternal life and true happiness.<sup>116</sup> An intellectually invigorating and spiritually inspiring life can be lived only by sublimating the body. Even for spiritual and intellectual growth not merely exercise of the intellect, and culture of the spirit are necessary; sacrifice of the body is a precondition for such spiritual and intellectual upsurge. As Tolstoy felt : "If you do not give your body for the life of the spirit there will be no life in you. He who does not give his body for the life of the spirit has no real life. Only that in me which gives up the body for the spirit has real life. And therefore our bodies are truly food for the real life."<sup>117</sup>

Thus the *New Testament* not only emphasises on work or efforts of the individual for one's existence and prosperity; it lays equal stress on bodily labour or manual labour, since sacrifice of body for the sake of real development of the individual forms the core of such emphasis. The sacrifice of the body does not mean committing suicide but sacrifice of bodily comforts, or luxuries, laziness, idleness or pampering of the body. Thus positively speaking, it implies labour with the body, sacrifice of bodily comfort that arises as a corollary of idleness and enjoyment of real worth of life, the intellectual excellences and spiritual bliss by way of work or bodily labour. If Tolstoy got inspiration for his concept of Bread Labour from the Russian peasant Bondaref, it will be equally true to say that the Bible also influenced his concept of Bread Labour.

Ruskin's *Unto This Last* as per Gandhi's claim provided the primary inspiration for him to think on the lines of Bread Labour. But Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, the philosophy contained in it, and the ideology expressed through it, are themselves derived from the Bible, the Parable of the Vineyard.<sup>118</sup> The owner of the Vineyard is no doubt philanthropic enough to pay the last man who came to work just one hour before the sunset same wage as he paid to those who came and worked from early in the morning, but he did not distribute doles among the unemployed persons. The payment is made in return for work. One must work as per his capacity and according to the opportunity provided to him. He must work

till the dusk of his life in order to earn his living. Each is entitled to maintenance wage only in return for work. Thus toil is a necessary condition of life. One who does not toil forfeits his claim for subsistence and right to life : "One has to toil till evening, till the end of one's life and that too cheerfully and ungrudgingly."<sup>119</sup> This is the message of the Parable of the Vineyard.

#### (e) The Gita

Gandhi considered the Bhagavad Gita as the most loving, affectionate, and nourishing mother, who never disappointed him and from whom he derived sustenance throughout his life. It was like his Open Sesame at each critical juncture of his life. As he further felt "The Gita is the universal mother. She turns away no body."<sup>120</sup> He added : "The recitation of the Gita verses will support you in your trials and console you in your distress and even in the darkness of solitary confinement."<sup>121</sup> But what is the essence of the message of the Gita ? As Bal Gangadhar Tilak has interpreted it : "The definite injunction of the Blessed Lord to Arjuna was : Fight ! . . . . Nay the doctrine of the Gita, has come into existence only in order to explain why a wise man must perform a particular act notwithstanding that he sees before his eyes the terrible consequences of it, and this is indeed the most important feature of the Gita."<sup>122</sup>

The primary objective of the Gita is therefore propagation of the philosophy of action or Karma Yoga. The Lord advises Arjuna, who having been overwhelmed by sorrow and overtaken by dejection and despondency at the sight of his own kinsmen on the battle field, had renounced his armaments, to shake off faint-heartedness, unmanliness, and effeminacy, and rise up to the occasion, take up his position and fight. The Lord's exhortation to Arjuna to engage oneself in the battle is evident from verses 3, 18, 37 and 38 of Chapter II of the Gita. In verses 30-38 the Lord tries to convince Arjuna why he should fight. The emphasis here is on the duty of the Kshatriya or the clan to which Arjuna belonged. As a Kshatriya or one belonging to the warrior class, it was the bounden duty of Arjuna to engage himself in a battle for the cause of justice and fair play. "A Kshatriya's happiness lies not in domestic pleasures

and comforts, but in fighting for the right.”<sup>123</sup> Unless Arjuna takes up his arms and engages himself in the battle against injustice, his reputation as a Kshatriya shall dwindle and shall be soiled. One’s reputation therefore according to Bhagavad Gita depends upon performance of one’s duty or the action of one’s calling. The battle, or the fight as referred to in the Gita is only symbolical. It stands for activity and that too unceasing and unremitting activity for the performance of the calling of one’s station. The epithet of battle simply signifies that for a Kshatriya, a battle-field is always the appropriate place for performance of one’s duty or Dharma or Swadharma.<sup>124</sup> The essence of the emphasis lies in unceasing effort. As Gandhi has observed : “The description of the battle serves only as a pretext. The Mahabharata itself was not composed with the objective of describing a battle. In the Bhagavad Gita the author has cleverly made use of the event to teach great truths.”<sup>125</sup>

The real significance of the battle as depicted in the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita is therefore an exhortation for performance of one’s duty. Since Arjuna was a warrior by birth and profession, it was enjoined on him to take up arms and fight the battle. Had Arjuna been born to any other caste or profession, the action associated with that profession, would have been advocated, be it the work of a husbandman or a Brahmin.

Thirty-four verses of a total of 72 of Chapter II or the Chapter on Sankhya Yoga have been devoted to Karmayoga, or the Path of Action. Besides, Chapter III has been christened as Karmayoga and Chapter IV, V and VI have attempted to demonstrate the superiority of the Path of Action or Karmayoga. Accordingly as Bal Gangadhar Tilak has observed, “the principal subject matter of the Gita” is “the exposition of the Karma-yoga,”<sup>126</sup> and his interpretation of the Gita has been entitled as the “Science of Karmayoga”. S. Radhakrishnan speaking about the Gita has observed : “It raises the question whether action or renunciation of action is better and concludes, that action is better . . . Right through, the teacher emphasises the need for action. He does not adopt the solution of dismissing the world as an illusion and action as a snare. He recommends the full active life of man in the world with the inner life

anchored in the Eternal Spirit. The Gita is therefore a mandate for action."<sup>127</sup>

The Lord's exhortation to Arjuna to renounce faint-heartedness and despondency and take to fight because true performance of the duties of a Kshatriya warranted such a move is reinforced by the argument that Budhiyoga or the Path of Knowledge as described in verses 39-53 of Chapter II also enjoined upon him pursuit of the path of action, although one has to perform such action in a spirit of renunciation and detachment and without expectation of fruits thereof. A Budhiyogi need not renounce action; it is only expected of him that he renounces his attachment to the fruits of such action or work with a spirit of detachment. As it has been explained by Bhagavan Shri Satyasai Baba, "When the desire to attain the fruits of action is renounced with full intellectual awareness then it becomes what Krishna calls Budhiyoga."<sup>128</sup> Thus Budhiyoga indicates the way of performance of action with a spirit of detachment and disinterestedness. Hence in verse 50 of Chapter II Yoga has been described as the "skill in action". The injunction of the Lord goes on :

*"tasmād yogāya yujyasva  
yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam"*<sup>129</sup>

The Sthitaprajnya as described in the last part of Chapter II, verses 54-72, is not one who has renounced all actions but one who has liberated himself from the expectations of fruits thereof. As Bhagavan Shri Satyasai Baba has observed : "The Sthitaprajnya releases himself from attachment."<sup>130</sup>

Further, "The Sthitaprajna knows neither the pains of griefs or the thrill of joy. He is not repulsed by one or attracted by the other. He will not retreat before pain or run forward towards pleasure."<sup>131</sup> Thus the Lord's emphasis is not on inaction but action without attachment for the fruits thereof.

In Chapter III an attempt has been made to establish the fact that work or action is inevitable for existence and inseparable from life. None can remain even for a moment without engaging himself in some work. Human nature impels him to be engaged in some work or the other.<sup>132</sup> As S. Radhakrishnan has explained : "So long as we lead embodied lives, we can not escape from action. Without work life can not be sustained . . . . While life remains, action is unavoid-

able. Thinking is an act, living is an act.”<sup>133</sup> Hence the Lord’s injunction to Arjuna is that he should engage himself in unremitting toil since work is worthier than idleness and action is better than inaction.<sup>134</sup> Even the maintenance of one’s physical life is inconceivable without action. As Edwin Arnold has explained :

“Do thine allotted task !

Work is more excellent than idleness;

The body’s life proceeds not lacking work.”<sup>135</sup>

As the Lord explains to Arjuna, the entire creation proceeded from Yajna or work; work and creation were born together. The creation is the result of Yajna or the work of Prajapati, and Prajapati or the Creator ordained that the creation can prosper or flourish, and rise to its full splendour and magnificence, only through action or Yajna. Gods can be worshipped only through action and not idleness and they bestow prosperity on those who perform their assigned duties. Persons who do not perform their duties but remain idle and enjoy the endowments of God are thieves.<sup>136</sup>

As Sir Edwin Arnold has translated it :

“Spake Prajapati—

In the beginning, when all men were made,

And, with mankind, the sacrifice— Do this !

Work ! sacrifice ! Increase and multiply

With sacrifice ! This shall be Kamaduk,

You/‘Cow of Plenty,’ giving back her milk

Of all abundance. Worship the gods thereby;

The gods shall yield thee grace. Those meats ye crave

The gods will grant to Labour, when it pays

Tithes in the altar-flame. But if one eats

Fruits of the earth, rendering to kindly Heaven

No gift of toil, that thief steals from his world.”<sup>137</sup>

Thus Edwin Arnold has interpreted Yajna as labour and toil. This is also evident from the interpretation of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, “It is clear that the word ‘Yajna’ means all the action (duties) prescribed for the four castes.”<sup>138</sup>

The Lord has even gone on to explain in detail how human existence is impossible without work, or labour. Leaving aside the ideological and philosophical arguments, to come to the level of mundane existence of man, he explains that life is



sustained by food, food is the product of rain, rain is the outcome of yajnah which in turn is a consequence of work or a product of work or labour.<sup>139</sup>

Thus, work or labour is indissolubly related to the universe or the creation. The creation proceeds from the work of the Creator and the creation can be sustained only by work. Work proceeds from the imperishable Brahman and the Brahman or the Imperishable, remains established in work.<sup>140</sup> As S. Radhakrishnan has expressed : "Action is rooted in the Imperishable. But for the action of Supreme, the world will fall into ruin."<sup>141</sup> As he has further added : "Action is a moral as well as a physical necessity for embodied beings."<sup>142</sup>

What to speak of ordinary mortals; even saints and Siddhas who have attained perfection in this world can not free themselves from the cycle of action. Even saints like Janaka who had attained blessedness and lived a life completely liberated from worldly enjoyment and pleasures kept themselves busy in action. The Lord pointed out to Arjuna that although He Himself was the embodiment of all virtues and every perfection, was the creator of the entire universe, omnipresent and omniscient, and had nothing beyond reach and nothing unattained and unattainable, He took for granted the cycle of work and remained active throughout.<sup>143</sup> As Edwin Arnold has interpreted it :

"Look on me,  
Thou Son of Pritha ! in the three wide worlds  
I am not bound to any toil, no height  
Awaits to scale, no gift remains to gain  
Yet I act here."<sup>144</sup>

Hence the Lord finally administers the advice to Arjuna to remain perpetually busy in the performance of one's duties. Those, who in defiance of the wheel of action, remain idle, are treated by the Lord as perpetually depraved, leading a vain life.<sup>145</sup> As Edwin Arnold has interpreted :

"He that abstains  
To help the rolling wheels of this great world,  
Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life,  
Shameful and vain."<sup>146</sup>

Even in Chapter IV of the Bhagavad Gita that is meant to espouse the cause of knowledge or to establish the significance

of the Path of Knowledge, the emphasis is on work and activity. As Bal Gangadhar Tilak has explained Chapter IV, "This Chapter further emphasises the principles of Karmayoga, which have been explained so far namely . . . . no body can escape karma (Action). Action must be performed, though the Reason may have become desireless."<sup>147</sup> In this Chapter the path of knowledge does not advocate renunciation of action but advocates desireless action, or action without expecting fruits thereof or renunciation of expectations of fruits of one's action, while performing the duties of one's station. As the Lord says in verse 13, the four-fold class division in the society is based on the nature of and work of persons. Hence the emphasis in this chapter is on work, free from the bondage of expectation of fruits thereof. Since work does not defile the Lord as He performs his duties with a sense of detachment, He advises Arjuna and through Arjuna, all human beings, to perform their assigned duties with the same spirit of detachment. Of course it is contended that those who attain wisdom by adopting the path of knowledge attain supreme peace and highest bliss.<sup>148</sup> It is no doubt advocated in this chapter that the Path of Knowledge like fire consumes all actions.<sup>149</sup> But the emphasis here is not on inaction or idleness; rather the essence of these verses is renunciation of selfish action or a plea for self-less action. In verse 31 the Lord has said that a non-performer of sacrifice or Yajna or work is not even entitled to worldly success what to speak of eternal bliss and in verse 32 it is said that no sacrifice or Yajna is conceivable without work or labour.

Thus even through the path of knowledge, the Lord tries to establish the superiority of action although the emphasis is on actions free from desires or fruits thereof or actions performed with a sense of detachment and selflessness. Accordingly Bal Gangadhar Tilak has observed "The advice has been given to Arjuna to perform Action with the joint help of Jnana and Yoga"<sup>150</sup> but not renunciation of action.

Even in Chapter V, superiority of action over mere acquisition of knowledge and renunciation of action has been emphasised. Although the same result or supreme bliss is attainable both by pursuing the path of action or karmayoga and renunciation of action or the path of knowledge, yet action

has been shown as superior to inaction or renunciation of action. As the Lord says in verse 6, Sannyasa or a state of renunciation itself becomes impossible of attainment without yoga or action whereas those who earnestly pursue the path of Karmayoga or the path of action reach the Absolute and thus a state of real Sannyasa. Hence although both renunciation of action and unselfish performance of one's duties, lead to the same goal, i.e. salvation for the soul, performance of selfless action is considered a better and superior method for the attainment of the objective.<sup>151</sup> As Bal Gangadhar Tilak has interpreted it : "The firm doctrine of the Gita is that though the Karmayoga, and renunciation are both equally productive of Release that is to say, though from the point of view of Release the effect of both is the same, yet considering the course of life in the world the better or more praise-worthy path is to continue to desirelessly perform Action even after one has acquired knowledge."<sup>152</sup>

Hence true renunciation or a state of true Sannyasa is not incompatible with performance of action; rather performance of action is the precondition even for the attainment of a state of Sannyasa. A state of perfection or a state of liberation from the bondage of action is inconceivable without performance of action.<sup>153</sup> For the attainment of a state of Sannyasa or to be a true yogi, action is thus a precondition. As S. Radhakrishnan has interpreted it : "What is demanded is not renunciation of works but, renunciation of selfish desire."<sup>154</sup>

Again the same emphasis on Karma or work or action is evident from Chapter VI. Negatively put, the Lord says that a Sannyasi or a Yogi is not one who does not perform his duties and remains in a state of inactivity and idleness. A state of Sannyasa implies a state of disciplined performance of one's duty and hence yoga or karmayoga or honest performance of selfless action with a sense of detachment for the fruits of one's efforts is a state of true sannyasa.<sup>155</sup> As B. G. Tilak has observed : "True Sannyasa consists in giving up a Desireful Reason or the Hope of Fruit. Sannyasa consists in the frame of the mind and not in the external act of giving up the maintenance of the sacrificial fire or ritual. Therefore that man alone who gives up the Hope of Fruit or the Samkalpa and

thus performs his duties can be called the true sannyasi.”<sup>156</sup>

The Lord's injunction to Arjuna is that whether it is a stage of aspiration for liberation or perfection or a state of attainment of liberation or perfection, for a Sannyasi, work is an infallible guide and invaluable weapon. Through work, an aspiring yogi makes his effort to attain a state of Sannyasa and even after attainment of Sannyasa, he must keep himself perpetually engaged in work. For a Sannyasi, Karmayoga is not a mere preliminary accomplishment. Even the “Yogarudha”—he who has acquired a state of eternal bliss and tranquillity—is required to remain ever busy in action. According to Tilak : “The Karmayogin should even in the state of perfection (Sidhavastha) continue to perform all actions desirelessly and merely as duties, and so long as he is alive, in the same manner as the Blessed Lord.”<sup>157</sup>

After the attainment of perfection the Yogarudha or Sannyasi acts remaining in a state of equanimity or “Sama”. But as S. Radhakrishnan has observed : “Sama does not mean the cessation of karma.”<sup>158</sup> The Yogarudha performs all his duties merely as duties, and without entertaining the hopes of fruits.<sup>159</sup> Accordingly Edwin Arnold has observed :

“Regard as true Renouncer him that makes  
Worship by work, for who renounceth not  
Works not as Yogin. So is that well said :  
‘By works the votary doth rise to faith,  
And saintship is the ceasing from all works’  
Because the perfect Yogin acts—but acts  
Unmoved by passions and unbound by deeds,  
Setting result aside.”<sup>160</sup>

Thus a Yogarudha, a true yogi or a true Sannyasi shall not renounce action, but perform all his duties, renouncing the expectations of fruits thereof. He does not perform these actions to satisfy his senses but with a sense of duty and detachment casting away all desires and hopes of the fruits of these actions.<sup>161</sup>

The true message of the Gita therefore is the philosophy of action. As S. Radhakrishnan has very appropriately observed : “The Gita is therefore a mandate for action.”<sup>162</sup> As he has further observed : “The Gita advocates detachment from desires and not cessation from work.”<sup>163</sup>

Not only the Bhagavad Gita makes a plea for action in place of inactivity or performance of one's duty and perpetual engagement in work; the theory of bread labour, i.e. work is intimately and indissolubly related to one's bread, is contained in the Gita. Particularly verse 14 of Chapter III of the Bhagavad Gita, speaks of the indissoluble relationship between bread and work and attempts to establish the truth that one's subsistence must be the product of one's own efforts and work. As Sir Edwin Arnold has explained this verse :

"By food the living live, food comes of rains,  
And rain comes by the pious sacrifice,  
And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil."<sup>164</sup>

Thus food must be the product of one's own toil and not a gift from any body not even from God.

Gandhi, who was profoundly influenced by the Bhagavad Gita, which was his cow of plenty or kamadhenu, derived his first lessons on the theory of Bread Labour from the Bhagavad Gita. For the idea that every body, whatever may be his station in life, must perform some function appropriate to his station, and his subsistence shall come as a reward for such function duly performed, Gandhi was no doubt indebted to Ruskin, Tolstoy and Bondaref; but he grasped the significance of the indissoluble bond between one's subsistence and one's labour even before he read the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin and became acquainted with the ideas of Bondaref. The primary source of inspiration for the ideas of Bread Labour as per his own acknowledgement was the Bhagavad Gita. Speaking about his indebtedness to Bhagavad Gita in respect of the concept of Bread Labour, Gandhi said on April 14, 1926 : "It is not recently that I have come to attach this meaning to Yajna. I have understood it in that sense ever since I first read the Gita. What I read about the Russian writer Bondaref's views on "Bread Labour" only confirmed my idea but the idea was with me from beginning and has grown stronger with years."<sup>165</sup>

Gandhi not only derived the idea of Bread Labour from the Bhagavad Gita in the sense that one must perform some function and engage himself in some work or action to justify his claim for the bread that he eats; he also derived the idea of Bread Labour in the sense of performance of some bodily labour or manual labour from the Gita too. The term Yajna,

or sacrifice or work as referred to at different places in the Gita has been understood by Gandhi as meaning bodily labour or physical labour. In explaining verse 10 of Chapter III of the Bhagavad Gita, Gandhi says : “ ‘Along with Yajna the Lord created men.’ Which type of Yajna is meant here ? Does the term have any special meaning ? I think it has. The reference here is not to mental or intellectual work. Brahma did not ask human beings to multiply and prosper merely by working with their minds; what he meant was that they should do so through bodily yajna, by working with the body . . . Thus bodily labour is our lot in life . . . The verse commencing with Saha-yajna then talks of bodily yajna.”<sup>166</sup>

Yajna therefore as contained in the Bhagavad Gita has been understood by Gandhi as meaning body labour. He has warned that we are doomed if we do not labour, if we do not bend the body and work with it. “If people worked with the shovel, or pickaxe would they be disturbed with evil desires ? . . . If we do our bodily yajna properly all will be well with us, we shall advance the good of our atma and of the world . . .”<sup>167</sup>

Gandhi argued that if the emphasis of the Bhagavad Gita is on Yajna, such Yajna cannot be performed “by lighting a few sticks” or arranging a bonfire. As Gandhi understood it Yajna in the sense of lighting bonfire might have had its relevance in the olden days, when the world was full of jungle, whose removal was essential for human existence and defence against deadly animals and venomous reptiles but in the modern world such lighting of fire is not the very essence of true Yajna and has thus no relevance. As Gandhi said : “Innumerable ceremonies were devised, all of which required the lighting of fire. If these rishis had lived in the desert of Sahara, they would have conceived of Yajna as refraining from cutting a single twig, as planting of trees or drawing a certain quantity of water.”<sup>168</sup> The idea of work or labour as contained in the Bhagavad Gita was therefore understood by Gandhi in the sense of bodily labour. As Gandhi understood verse 10 of Chapter III, yajna meant bodily labour. Accordingly he says : “Using one’s limbs, labouring, working for others good, these ideas follow from this one verse.”<sup>169</sup>

Gandhi believed that the Bhagavad Gita instead of emphasising on simple prayer or meditation, made a plea for bodily

labour. Man's existence in this world does not depend so much on intellectual or mental labour as on physical or bodily labour. "The world would go on even if there were no intelligent men and women in it, but it would be nowhere if all people refused to do physical work."<sup>170</sup> In interpreting verse 12 of Chapter III that speaks of sacrifice and describes the person who acquires his means of livelihood without performing any sacrifice, as a thief, Gandhi says, "He is a thief who does not do bodily labour for society."<sup>171</sup> In interpreting verse 13 that says that the righteous men should collect their food after appropriate sacrifice Gandhi says: "One should regularly and daily perform yajna, make a sacrifice, of which body labour is the foundation."<sup>172</sup>

Thus Gandhi under the influence of the Bhagavad Gita was thoroughly convinced that yajna or performance of Swadharma is inconceivable without bodily labour. Bodily sacrifice is essential for earning one's means of survival. Tender care of the body is the very negation of the law of nature and the law of the universe. "There is no yajna for him who is not ready to mortify his body."<sup>173</sup> He further says: "The original intention behind the idea of yajna was that people should do physical work."<sup>174</sup>

Hence Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour particularly his emphasis on bodily labour was initially due to the inspiration he derived from the Bhagavad Gita. As Gandhi has himself admitted, whereas the Russian writer Bondaref's emphasis was on labour as the source of one's livelihood, the influence of the Gita made him to see the other side of the medal, i.e. the labour so performed must be necessarily manual or bodily labour. As Gandhi has said about his indebtedness to Bondaref in respect of his concept of Bread Labour: "The Russian writer has stated one side of the truth. We understand the other side too, we now understand the idea of bread labour better for by yajna, we do not mean labour as a means of livelihood. Thanks to the associations which the term call up we do not restrict yajna to mean this and no more. Labour in this context means bodily labour. He alone should eat who has laboured for twelve hours."<sup>175</sup>

To sum up the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour derived its inspiration both from foreign and indigenous sources, from the great religious scriptures, like the Bible and the Gita and

the philosophy of great thinkers like Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy. If as an adopted child of Bhagavad Gita Gandhi derived his primary inspiration for the concept of Bread Labour from the "Karmayoga" or the philosophy of action of Bhagavad Gita his deep attachment to the Bible and the philosophy of work of Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy provided further confirmation to the belief that each shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Hence M. A. Drobyshv, the Soviet Scholar of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, observed in the UNESCO Symposium held at Paris : "Under the influence of ancient Indian religions and philosophies on the one hand and such nineteenth century American and European authors as Thoreau, Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy on the other, Gandhi came to the conclusion that man must live by his own labour, which implies not only renunciation of parasitic living and the necessity for each to make his contribution to the labour effort of society, but more particularly production by one's own hand of all or almost all means of subsistence."<sup>176</sup>

Thus the concept of Bread Labour of Gandhi is a composite product of all these various influences and the influence of the Bible that shaped his life and philosophy in general.

### BREAD LABOUR AND THE NATURE OF WORK

The emphasis of the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour is not only on labour for earning one's bread but also on physical, manual or bodily labour. Gandhi interpreted the term *yajna*, so much valued and so much emphasised in the Bhagavad Gita, to mean bodily labour or action through employment of one's limbs. But even in respect of bodily labour Gandhi differentiated between different types of bodily labour and was far from being convinced that all types of bodily labour would satisfy the requirements of Bread Labour conceived by him. Physical labour of a lunatic who runs amock and kills innocent citizens or the physical or bodily labour of policemen who shoot at the crowd causing casualties, or of military personnel busy in bombing, would fall far short of the nature of Gandhian Bread Labour. Besides, like the French Physiocrats, he was not prepared to accept the bodily labour, the movement of the limbs of the industrialists or commercialists or the trading



section of the community as Bread Labour and treated such labour as sterile. It is said about the Physiocrats : "The majority of them thought or implied that by growing wheat a man added to the wealth of the nation more than he did by making bread out of the wheat. Only the growing or catching or digging up of something seemed to increase the world's stock of 'real' wealth."<sup>177</sup>

Thus the Physiocrats considered only agriculture as productive, and the real source of all wealth. Like the Physiocrats Gandhi also advocated that labour or manual labour in order to acquire the dignity and status of Bread Labour must be really productive and he discovered like the Physiocrats such productivity in agriculture alone. Hence for Gandhi agricultural operation constitutes the right and ideal type of Bread Labour. Accordingly Gandhi has written : "This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone."<sup>178</sup> Thus Gandhi, idealised and idolised the work of agriculturists and considered agricultural operations as the only work that invests manual labour with the dignity of Bread Labour. But his preference for agricultural operation as the true and real type of Bread Labour that entitles one to earn his bread, is not due to the influence of Physiocrats; it is as much a result of his pragmatic approach, as it is a result of his emotional attachment to the philosophical position of his masters like Ruskin and Tolstoy, protagonist of the idea of Bread Labour like Bondaref and the influences of the Gita and the Bible.

A practical idealist that he was, Gandhi of course became conscious as any other ordinary mortal that food-stuff is a direct product of agriculture and no other labour and no other work, neither the work of a trader nor that of an industrialist can produce anything, any real wealth, or any value and least of all any food-stuff. Even industries producing food-stuffs like edible oil, biscuits, sugar and processed food are inconceivable without primary commodities produced by agriculture. Thus literally speaking, agriculture alone can enable one to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow or thus the only real type of Bread Labour of Gandhian conception.

But ideologically speaking, under the influence of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau and Bondaref, and the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, while learning the doctrine of Bread Labour, Gandhi

learnt also that Bread Labour should be intimately related to agriculture.

Tolstoy, an advocate of Bread Labour not only gave a place of pre-eminence to physical labour; he particularly elevated the work of the peasants to a very high pedestal in his scheme of things. As he said : "Men live and support themselves by agriculture as is proper for all men."<sup>179</sup> As a matter of fact realisation came to him about the intimate relationship between life and labour by his contact with the peasants. As early as 1860 while working with the peasants in his estate Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy discovered that manual labour in farms is capable of providing the highest satisfaction of life. "He got up one fine morning at 5 o'clock in order to direct the farm work himself; towards evening he had found himself growing angry, but instead of giving way to his feeling he had started to work at the manuring, side by side with the peasants, mostly serfs, until he was in heavy sweat and he had not only thrown off his anger, but had reached a stage in which every thing seemed good and he felt fond of every body."<sup>180</sup>

In the seventies Tolstoy's more frequent contact with the peasantry, particularly through the organisation of Famine Relief Fund in 1873 when the country had been engulfed in a famine, and his work in educating the peasants, brought him closer to the peasants. As it has been observed : "About this time Tolstoy began thinking in terms of Bread Labour."<sup>181</sup> He derived further confirmation for his idea of Bread Labour from the writings of Bondaref a Russian peasant who wrote a book on the "Law of Labour". As Tolstoy has written : "In the Bible it is said that it is a law for human being to eat bread in the sweat of their brow, and in sorrow to bring forth children. A peasant, Bondaref who wrote an article about this lit up for me the wisdom of that saying."<sup>182</sup> Bandaref had written in his book : "Thou shalt eat thy bread with the sweat of thy brow. That is an immutable law. Just as women obey the law of child birth through labour pain so man should obey the hard law of labour. Woman can not liberate herself from her destiny. If she adopts a child not of her own, that child will be a stranger inspite of all and the woman will be deprived of the joys of motherhood. The same law is applicable to man's labour. If a man eats bread which he has not earned, he is

deprived of the joy of labour.”<sup>183</sup> Tolstoy has quoted it with approval in his “*La Pensee de L’humanite*”. In defending Henry George’s “Single Tax proposal” on land, Tolstoy wrote to Bondaref that it shall uphold the interests of the peasants, liberate them from a state of bondage, elevate their status and put an end to idleness, and leisurely life of the landholders or the nobility. “That the non-workers would be saved from the sin of exploiting other people’s labour (in doing which they are often not the guilty parties for they have from childhood been educated in idleness, and do not know how to work) and from the still greater sin of all kinds of shuffling and lying to justify themselves in committing this sin; and the workers would be saved from the temptation and sin of envying, condemning and being exasperated with the non-workers, so that one cause of separation among men would be destroyed.”

Thus Tolstoy was a champion of the rights of the peasants and an advocate of their liberation from feudalistic bondage. He considered the life of a peasant as enviable not only because a peasant’s life involves physical labour; because of their involvement in physical labour the peasants keep themselves physically fit whereas the so-called fortunate people rolling in luxury really suffer both physically and mentally. As Tolstoy writes : “Count ever in your memory, the rich men and their wives, you have known, or now know, and you will notice that most of them are ill. Among them a healthy man who is not undergoing treatment, continually or periodically, summer after summer is as much an exception as is a sick man among the peasantry. All these fortunate people without exception begin with onanism . . . they all have bad teeth, are all grey or bald at an age when a workman is just reaching his full strength. They are nearly all subject to nervous, digestive and sexual illness, from gluttony, drunkenness, debauchery and doctoring and those who do not die young spend half their life in being doctored and taking injections of morphia . . . Consider their deaths, this one shot himself; that one rotted with Syphilis; another old man died from the effects of a stimulant, while another died young from a flogging to which he submitted in his desire for sex stimulation; one was eaten alive by lice, another by worms, one drank himself to death, another died of overeating; one from morphia and another as

the result of an abortion.”<sup>184</sup>

Tolstoy not only preferred agricultural operations over all other forms of Bread Labour; he renounced the privilege of his station, liberated his tenants, gave away his land to them and even worked with the peasants and lived the life of a farmer. Gandhi's admiration for Tolstoy was partly due to the fact that the latter, embraced the life of a peasant. Speaking about Tolstoy as early as 1905 Gandhi wrote in the Indian Opinion : “He gave up his wealth and took to a life of poverty. He has lived like a peasant for many years now and earns his needs by his own labour.”<sup>185</sup> Later on he wrote in the Indian Opinion : “It was as a goodman that the world knew him. In India we would have described him as a maharshi or Fakir. He renounced his wealth, gave up a life of comfort to embrace that of a simple peasant.”<sup>186</sup> Speaking about Tolstoy's philosophy, Gandhi wrote in his Indian Opinion : “He believes that . . . Agriculture is the true occupation of man.”<sup>187</sup>

Thus Tolstoy, whose life and philosophy so profoundly influenced the life and philosophy of Gandhi and from whom he partly derived his inspiration for his concept of Bread Labour also acted as a major force in setting the tone to the Gandhian concept that agricultural operation is the true, real and the ideal manifestation of Bread Labour.

Gandhi while deriving the concept of Bread Labour from Tolstoy was conscious that the latter in turn had been influenced in respect of this concept by Bondaref. Hence he has written : “The divine law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands was first stressed by a writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it and gave it wider publicity.”<sup>188</sup> But Bondaref was a peasant. The initial advocacy of the concept of Bread Labour by a peasant, must have convinced Gandhi that Bread Labour is inconceivable without work in a farm.

Although emphasis on Bread Labour in the sense that one must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow is not so clearly in evidence in the pages of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin has unerringly expressed his preference for in work the field or agricultural operation. He considered agricultural operation as the really productive operation and held at a discount professions like trade, exchange or commerce. As he observed : “One man by

sowing and reaping turns one measure of corn into two. That is profit . . . Profit or material gain is attainable not by exchange."<sup>189</sup> Further he realised that there are only two kinds of "true production"—"One of seed, one of food or production for the Ground and for the Mouth."<sup>190</sup> Besides, he felt that "the prosperity of any nation is in exact proportion to the quantity of labour which it spends in obtaining . . . means of life."<sup>191</sup> Ruskin also treated agricultural implements as the true capital. As he said : "The best and simplest general type of capital is a well made plough share . . . It becomes true capital only by another kind of splendour, when it is seen . . . to grow bright in the furrow."<sup>192</sup> That apart in his view only operations connected with the soil are truly beautiful. Hence he said : "No scene is continually and untiringly loved but one rich by joyful human labour smooth in field, fair in garden, full in orchard, trim, sweet, and frequent in homestead; ringing with voices of vivid existence."<sup>193</sup>

Thus although Ruskin belonged to the pedagogic profession and was a great intellectual, he held in high esteem agricultural operations. If Gandhi learned a lesson in Bread Labour from *Unto This Last* he discovered from it too the message "that the life of the tiller of the soil . . . is the life worth living."<sup>194</sup> Thus partly under the influence of Ruskin, Gandhi subscribed to the idea that agricultural operation is the pure and perfect form of Bread Labour.

If Thoreau profoundly influenced Gandhi's socio-economic doctrine, it is but natural to expect that Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour must have been duly influenced by the life and philosophy of Thoreau. Gandhi wrote in the *Indian Opinion* on October 26, 1905 : "David Thoreau was a great writer, philosopher, poet, and withal a most practical man, that is he taught nothing he was not prepared to practice in himself. He was one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced."<sup>195</sup> But apart from other messages that Thoreau's life held out for the posterity, the one that is most important is his life near the Walden Pond. He lived the life of a peasant, a simple farmer who ploughed his land, prepared his field and produced his own food, from the soil, i.e. beans, potatoes, peas and sweetcorn.<sup>196</sup> As he has written : "Those summer days which some of my contemporaries devoted to the fine arts in

Boston or Rome, and others to contemplation in India and others to trade in London or New York, I thus with the other farmers of New England devoted to husbandry. Not that I wanted bean to eat, for I am by nature a Pythagorean, so far as beans are concerned, whether they mean porridge or voting and exchanged them for rice, but perchance, as some must work in fields if only for the sake of tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day.”<sup>197</sup> Thus Thoreau not only believed in the philosophy that one must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; he practised it in right earnest in his own life, and that too through agricultural operation. This must have influenced Gandhi to consider agricultural operation as the most pure, perfect and the ideal form of Bread Labour.

The influence of Ravishankar Gandhi's cook to whom reference has been made in his autobiography is perhaps not less important in driving home to Gandhi the primacy of agricultural operations as a means of earning one's livelihood.<sup>198</sup> When Ravishankar a Brahmin and Gandhi's amateur cook was asked whether he knew Sandhya (daily worship) he replied, “Sandhya Sir! The plough is our Sandhya, and the spade our daily ritual. That is the type of Brahmin I am, I must live on your mercy. Otherwise agriculture is of course there for me.”<sup>199</sup> Of course Gandhi has written, “So I had to be Ravishankar's teacher”<sup>200</sup>, but it can not be doubted that Ravishankar also taught Gandhi the lesson that agricultural operation is the real means of earning one's livelihood and plough and spade or other agricultural implements are the real capitals for earning one's livelihood. That bread must be earned by the sweat of one's brow that comes out of one's engagement in agricultural operations must have been realised by Gandhi partly due to his contact with Ravishankar.

The Bhagavad Gita and the Bible must have also influenced Gandhi's conviction that agricultural operation is the most ideal and the perfect form of Bread Labour. Chapter III of the Gita while preaching the philosophy of Karmayoga or the doctrine of ceaseless effort speaks in verse 14 :

*“annād bhavanti bhūtāni,  
Parjanyaād annasambhavaḥ  
Yajñād bhavati parjanyo  
Yajñaḥ Karmasamudbhavaḥ”.*

Thus the verse speaks that human beings are sustained by food which is nourished by rain that comes of yajna which ultimately is a product of work. Hence the verse indirectly conveys that human life is sustained by agricultural operations. Besides, food is the direct product of agricultural operation. Gandhi rightly understood the message of the Karmayoga of the Gita as contained in this verse and accordingly under its influence he said : "We violate one of the precepts of the Gita and suffer dire consequences. It says that a person who eats without performing yajna is a thief; the true meaning of yajna here is physical labour on a farm. If we make it a rule to work hard, to work, that is with a shovel for four hours everyday in a field, for the purpose of digesting our food, and would observe other rules . . . premature deaths might be far fewer among us."<sup>201</sup> Later explaining the concept of Bread Labour he said : "The one universal form of such labour is agriculture and it should therefore be looked upon as yajna."<sup>202</sup> Thus the Gita must have amply contributed to the Gandhian notion that agriculture is the ideal form of Bread Labour.

The Bible, apart from conveying the message of unceasing effort as discussed earlier is full of references to activities in the field or in the farm-yard. The emphasis of the Parable of the Vineyard is not only on work or bodily labour, but on manual work in the farm. The Parable of the "figtree" is a sufficient indicator that man in order to live, blossom and produce fruits that can nourish the rest of the world, must work and must do a lot of digging the ground round the tree, manuring and watering it. As the gardener advised the owner of the garden who suggested removal of the fig-tree that did not bear fruit consecutively for three years : "Leave it Sir, this one year while I dig round it and manure it. And if it bears next season well and good; if not, you shall let it down."<sup>203</sup> Hence according to the Bible, the fertility of life and its productivity, depend upon manual work done on the soil, from which Gandhi must have also derived his inspiration for the concept of Bread Labour understood in the sense of manual labour in the farm.

Thus under the composite influences of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Bondaref, Ravishankar and of the Gita and the Bible, Gandhi grasped that agricultural operation constitutes the ideal

type of Bread Labour. Hence when Gandhi said that “after all nature has intended man to earn his bread by manual labour ‘by the sweats of his brow’ ”—he qualified it by saying, “simple agriculture or such other calling, must be the highest method of earning one’s livelihood”.<sup>204</sup>

If agricultural operation according to Gandhi is the ideal form of bread labour, all should necessarily engage themselves in agricultural operation to earn their bread. In an agricultural country like India where over 75% of people depend for their sustenance on agriculture, it is but natural to expect that a believer in the theory of Bread Labour shall necessarily advocate engagement in agricultural operation as the ideal form of Bread Labour. But Gandhi as a practical idealist realised that agriculture in the present state of things can not support and ensure dignified existence to all the inhabitants in the country. Agricultural operation by the very nature of things, can not provide engagement and full employment to all, round the year, and sufficient bread to all. Agricultural operations should be supplemented by other activities to provide opportunities to all to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow or engage themselves in Bread Labour. Hence as Gandhi has written : “This labour (Bread Labour) can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate everybody is not in a position to take to it. A person, can therefore spin, or weave, or take up carpentry or smithy, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture however to be the ideal.”<sup>205</sup>

Bread Labour may therefore assume the form of spinning, weaving and other handicrafts apart from agriculture. Gandhi’s emphasis was on productivity and social utility of work. He, even included scavenging within the scope of Bread Labour although agricultural operation forms the ideal form of Bread Labour.

### GANDHI AND BREAD LABOUR IN PRACTICE

Gandhi speaking about Tolstoy has written, “Tolstoy practises what he preaches”.<sup>206</sup> Like his master, it was also Gandhi’s speciality to live as he preached. Gandhi not only sincerely believed and preached that each shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow or by engaging himself in some form



of Bread Labour, and particularly agricultural operation; he practised it in his own life and induced his followers to live as per this prescription. The Phoenix Settlement, Gandhi's first experiment in community living in a more organised form, (because his family was more than a family and more or less a community) was of course partly conceived as a measure to tide over the financial stringency that Indian Opinion was constantly bringing up. As Gandhi has written: "Still the paper continued octopus like, to devour all it received and wanted more. The situation could only be saved by heroic measures. Patch work was useless, Palliatives were dangerous. There remained then an appeal to the devoted workers and friends in favour of adopting a novel and revolutionary project . . . . The plan was shortly this. If a piece of ground sufficiently large and far away from the hustles of the town, could be secured for housing the plant and machinery each one of the workers could have his plot of land on which he could live. This would simplify the question of living under sanitary and healthy conditions without heavy expenses . . . The management would thus be saved the necessity of having to find a large sum of money from week to week . . . .'"<sup>207</sup>

But the creation of the Phoenix Settlement was the immediate effect of the transformation wrought in his thought process as a result of his reading of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. After reading *Unto This Last* as Gandhi has written in his autobiography: "I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice."<sup>208</sup> But to start with, what he wanted to reduce to practice is the third and the most important message of *Unto This Last*: "That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living" from which follow as natural corollaries the first two messages, i.e. equality of wages and welfare of all. Hence Gandhi has written: "I talked over the whole thing with Mr. West, described to him the effect *Unto This Last* had produced on my mind, and proposed that Indian Opinion should be removed to a farm, on which every one should labour drawing the same living wage, and attending to the press work in spare time."<sup>209</sup>

The financial stringency that Indian Opinion was confronted with, was no doubt a factor in influencing the decision of

Gandhi to establish the Phoenix Settlement; yet the most important factor in urging Gandhi to embark upon such venture was undoubtedly his passion to put his concept of Bread Labour into practice. Accordingly it has been very appropriately observed : "The financial complications of *Indian Opinion* seemed to be a trivial affair to one who henceforward would hold his profession in no greater esteem, than he would hold the trade of the barber and who would dedicate himself to a life of labour."<sup>210</sup>

Gandhi himself worked in the farm and engaged himself in all productive manual labour. "He himself worked in the kitchen, ground corn and turned the wheel in printing his weekly *Indian Opinion*. He not only toiled cheerfully, but what was more made the tasks of others light and happy."<sup>211</sup> Gandhi and Mr. West purchased the plots of land that constituted the Phoenix Settlement. Thus Gandhi was almost a co-proprietor of the Settlement; yet he did not exempt himself from the fulfilment of the general requirement of Bread Labour and worked almost as sincerely as other inmates of the Settlement. Hence as it has been observed : "Mr. Gandhi settled down on his new property with some European friends and led the life about which Ruskin had written but not lived."<sup>212</sup>

As for Gandhi's own admission, it cannot be disputed that the Settlement was partly a device to tide over the financial stringency that *Indian Opinion* was then confronted with; yet the most weighty reason that propelled Gandhi to undertake such experiment was the desire to give effect to the philosophy of Ruskin and Tolstoy that one shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow or manual labour or bodily labour. Hence he has himself said about the objective behind the establishment of the Phoenix Settlement : "The workers could live a more simple and natural life and the idea of Ruskin and Tolstoy (be) combined with strict business principles."<sup>213</sup> Some years later, he wrote once again in the *Indian Opinion* : "The scheme as readers of this journal are aware, is intended to put into practice, the essential teachings of Tolstoy and Ruskin."<sup>214</sup> But what Ruskin and Tolstoy made the core of their thought is physical work by all in order to earn their livelihood.

As it has been indicated earlier Gandhi under the influence of Tolstoy and Ruskin not only considered manual labour or

bodily labour as the only passport to means of living; he considered agricultural operation as the ideal form of Bread Labour. Accordingly it was one of the objectives of Gandhi to engage the inmates of the Settlement in agricultural operation, i.e. the real, ideal, and unadulterated type of Bread Labour. Hence he wrote about the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement in the *Indian Opinion* that apart from fulfilling other objectives, "Each could become his own agriculturist" and have "an immediate prospect of owning a piece of land on the most advantageous terms."<sup>215</sup> To give shape to this idea the one hundred acre Phoenix Settlement was divided into three acre plots and allotted to the inmates for cultivation.

Gandhi so firmly adhered to the idea of Bread Labour and the idea so pre-occupied his mind and became so much a part of his philosophy of life that in his letter to Chhaganlal written on May 5, 1906 from Johannesburg he wrote : "I am glad you are attending to the improvement of your ground. It is most necessary work and I would like you, now that you will be freer, to devote your time to it methodically. There should not be a weed within your two acres."<sup>216</sup> The Phoenix trust deed as published in the *Indian Opinion* on 14.9.1912 unerringly stated that, the pioneers who established the Settlement, had before them the lofty objectives "To follow and promote the ideals set forth by Tolstoy and Ruskin in their lives and works" and "So far as possible to order their lives so as to be able ultimately to earn their living by handicraft or agriculture carried on without the aid so far as possible of machinery".<sup>217</sup> Thus the Phoenix Settlement was primarily a device to implement the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour.

The Tolstoy Farm or the Settlement started by Gandhi in South Africa during the days of Satyagraha movement primarily with the immediate objective of lodging the dependents of the imprisoned Satyagrahis and providing them with their subsistence also provided Gandhi another provocation to further experiment his theory of Bread Labour. His Satyagraha campaign implied voluntary courting of imprisonment by the Satyagrahis. "But what about their families, in the meanwhile ? No one would engage as an employee a man who was constantly going to jail and when he was released how was he to maintain himself as well as those dependent on him ?"<sup>218</sup> Prior to the

starting of the Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi had so arranged that the families and dependents of the Satyagrahis could get subsistence allowance depending upon their respective needs. But there were "no large funds at Mr. Gandhi's command".<sup>219</sup> As Gandhi himself acknowledges, "I was not free from anxiety on the score of finance."<sup>220</sup> As he further says, "It was indeed hard to prosecute a long and protracted struggle, without funds."<sup>221</sup> Of course funds used to trickle down at the time of need. On his return from London after the failure of the negotiation for a Settlement, he got a donation of Rs. 25,000 from Ratanji Jamshedji Tata. The amount of course was sufficient for meeting the immediate needs, but Gandhi's idealistic mind, his passion for truth, and his flair for the ideal that one should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, had the better of him. Satyagrahis and their families must practise the principle of self-reliance and the ideology of bread labour. Hence speaking about the gift of money obtained from R. J. Tata Gandhi has written : "But this or even the largest possible gifts of money could not by itself help forward a Satyagraha struggle, a fight on behalf of Truth consisting chiefly in self-purification and self reliance. A Satyagraha struggle is impossible without Capital in the shape of character."<sup>222</sup>

Hence Gandhi's emphasis was mainly on moral value and the spirit of self-reliance of the family and dependents of the Satyagrahis. In selecting a place for the rehabilitation of these affected people, one of Gandhi's criteria was no doubt economy but the selection of a plot of land outside the town and naming it after Tolstoy, explains Gandhi's real motive. As Gandhi has written : "To live in a city would have been like straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. The house-rent alone would perhaps amount to the same sum as the food bill and it would not be easy to live simple life amidst the varied distractions of a city. Again in a city it would be impossible to find a place where many families could prosecute some useful industry, in their own homes."<sup>223</sup>

Hence the Tolstoy Farm, or the "Cooperative Commonwealth" that Gandhi established in South Africa for the rehabilitation of the family of the Satyagrahis, with the benevolence and cooperation of Mr. Kallenbach, was based on the idea of Bread Labour. Every inmate of the farm co-operated

in the collective venture of self-reliance and self-help. For the construction of the Farm, its operation, and for the household work, no hired labour was employed. The inmates worked as masons and carpenters. As Gandhi has written : "Everything therefore from cooking to scavenging was done with our own hands."<sup>224</sup> The ladies were engaged in cooking whereas the rest assisted them or engaged themselves in farming activities or gardening. "The settlers worked harder on the farm than in the prisons. It was obligation on all, young and old, who were not engaged in the kitchen, to give sometime to gardening and to look after the fruits trees."<sup>225</sup> Apart from gardening and farm activities that the inmates undertook—the task on which Gandhi laid so much emphasis as the embodiment of Bread Labour, small-scale industries were started in the Farm to make it self-supporting. Carpentry and sandal-making were undertaken on commercial basis. As Gandhi has written : "The work before us was to make the Farm, a busy hive of industry, thus to save money and in the end to make the families self-supporting."<sup>226</sup>

All the inmates of the Farm not only worked and lived like labourers, but they donned the dress of labourers. As Gandhi has himself written, "We had all become labourers, and therefore put on labourers' dress."<sup>227</sup> The ladies took charge of tailoring department apart from cooking. Even Gandhi helped the ladies in cooking<sup>228</sup> and "Kallenbach a rich or at any rate well-to-do man shared every labour".<sup>229</sup> To sum up as Gandhi has written : "The labour for putting up the building is contributed by the Satyagrahis, and Mr. Kallenbach. They do every kind of work, such as loading and unloading, fetching water, chopping wood, transporting goods from the station etc."<sup>230</sup>

The work in the Tolstoy Farm went so deep into his head and the idea of Bread Labour overtook him so much that he renounced his lucrative legal profession in the year 1910, that fetched him an annual income of about five to six thousand pounds a year, for all times to come and embraced the life of a labourer perpetually.<sup>231</sup> In his letter to Manganlal from the Tolstoy Farm on August 21, 1910 Gandhi wrote : "I for one am a farmer, and I wish you all to become farmers, or continue as such, if you have already become farmers. My way of life has completely changed here. The whole day is spent in digging

the land and other manual labour instead of in writing and explaining things to people. I prefer this work and consider this alone to be my duty.”<sup>232</sup> Thus Gandhi’s life underwent a significant transformation in the direction of complete identification with his ideal of Bread Labour while he was at the Tolstoy Farm. He was not only convinced about the rationality of the concept of Bread Labour; he had himself taken a deep plunge into the philosophy and lived the life of a labourer. Henceforward his bread became directly related to manual labour. He practised what he preached. As he has written about his observance of the theory of Bread Labour while in South Africa : “Tolstoy made a deep impression on my mind, and even in South Africa, I began to observe the rule to the best of my ability.”<sup>233</sup>

The bed-rock of the Satyagraha Ashram established by Gandhi on his return to India was also Bread Labour. Before the Ashram was actually launched, Gandhi prepared an “Estimate of Expenditure” a study of which reveals that what was uppermost in Gandhi’s mind was starting an Ashram with emphasis on Bread Labour and agricultural and allied operations, for the inmates. As the Estimate reads : “At least five acres of land will be required for cultivation. Agricultural implements sufficient for atleast thirty persons to work with, will be needed. These should include hoes, shovels and pickaxes.”<sup>234</sup> Gandhi not only planned in terms of agricultural operation in the Ashram; the “Estimate” also included provision for carpenter’s and cobbler’s tools.<sup>235</sup> Besides he felt : “I think we shall need blacksmith’s and mason’s tools and many others besides. But I have not taken into account these and also equipment for educational purposes. Five or more indigenous looms will be the main requirements among the latter as far as I can see.”<sup>236</sup>

The emphasis was not only on manual labour for the sake of earning one’s bread; the labour must be enough to produce sufficient bread for all the inmates and thus making all the inmates and the Ashram at large self-sufficient. The idea “I don’t see any possibility of our being able to provide, this (the annual expenses) from our produce, during the first year”<sup>237</sup> has inherent in it the ideal of making the Ashram self-sufficient. The Draft Constitution of the Ashram and the

statement of its objectives, stipulated among other things the importance of Bread Labour or manual work. "The controllers believe that body labour is a duty imposed by nature, upon mankind. Such labour is the only means by which, man may sustain himself, his mental and spiritual powers should be used for the common good only."<sup>238</sup>

As already indicated earlier Gandhi not only made bodily labour an essential condition for acquiring one's bread; he considered agricultural operation as the ideal type of Bread Labour. In the statement of the objectives of the Ashram such emphasis is also evident. "As the vast majority in the world live on agriculture, the controllers will always devote some part of their time to working on the land; when that is not possible, they will perform some other bodily labour."<sup>239</sup>

Even the lessons imparted to the students in the Ashram, included training in agriculture and handloom-weaving as its important components.<sup>240</sup> In the Ashram all the inmates engaged themselves in some type of manual labour. Everyday the inmates did manual work for three and half hours in form of drawing water, grinding, sweeping, weaving, cooking etc.<sup>241</sup> As Gandhi wrote in the *Young India* in reply to a critic who felt that the Ashramites were living on charity, "Let him understand that every member of the institution gives both his or her body and mind to its work."<sup>242</sup> And later on Gandhi wrote in the *Ashram Observances in Action* : "The Ashram holds that every man and woman must work in order to live. . . . And ever since the Ashram was founded, bread labour has been perhaps its most characteristic feature."<sup>243</sup> As he further added : "Be that as it may, the observance best kept in the Ashram is that of bread labour, and no wonder. Its fulfilment is easy with ordinary care. For certain hours in the day there is nothing to be done but work. Work is therefore bound to be put in. A worker may be lazy, inefficient, or inattentive, but he works for a number of hours all the same."<sup>244</sup>

Thus Bread Labour in one form or the other, drawing-water or splitting fire-wood, agriculture, dairying, weaving, carpentry, tanning etc. formed an essential part of an inmate's daily life.

Gandhi was no exception to the general principles and vows of the Ashram and he contributed his quota of labour to the common pool in exchange of his own bread. He did his part

of the job either as a spinner or a weaver or a drawer of water, or as a sweeper, cleaning latrines being his most favourite craft. Hence it has been observed : "What he could do and with surprising energy, for such a small, and apparently frail man, was manual labour, including the digging of latrines and the transport of excrement."<sup>245</sup> Gandhi not only wanted the inmates of his Ashram to practise the principle of Bread Labour and himself lived a life as per such prescription; he even prescribed that ministers in independent India should also "perform body labour for at least one hour daily either in the form of spinning or scavenging, growing of food or of vegetables."<sup>246</sup>

### BREAD LABOUR AND THE WAGE

Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour that each must perform manual labour in order to earn his bread, speaks not only of the duty of each to engage oneself in some form of bodily labour to lay claim on one's livelihood; its emphasis on the right of each individual who engages himself in some form of creative and productive body labour to claim a dignified existence should not be lost sight of. It is as much a right of each individual to live a dignified existence as it is his duty to engage himself in some form of bodily labour to qualify himself for his subsistence. If one's subsistence shall be a product of his bodily labour, one who labours must necessarily get his subsistence. If labour shall be treated as the source of livelihood, when labour is performed, subsistence should naturally flow from it. If labour is treated as the cause of one's subsistence, the fulfilment of the cause must necessarily give rise to its effect, the subsistence. Deprivation of one who engages himself in some form of honest bodily labour or manual labour, of his livelihood or subsistence, is as much an infringement of the law of Bread Labour, as is the act of laying claim on one's subsistence without performing some kind of bodily labour. This in short is the real essence of Gandhian concept of Bread Labour.

The Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya or Socialism that encompasses the welfare of all, and the balanced development of each individual, while laying comparatively greater emphasis on the moral and spiritual growth of the individual, does not



completely neglect his material needs. In Gandhi's scheme of things, each individual must have his basic minimum to meet the material needs of the body. Hence as already referred to earlier he comprehended, "Every one must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children, and adequate medical relief." Interpreted in the context of Bread Labour, each individual in the Sarvodaya social order or under the socialism of Gandhian conception who engages himself in some type of honest body labour or manual labour shall therefore be entitled to a balanced diet, a decent house and enough resources for the education of his children and medical relief of himself and his family. But in this age of money-economy, where all transactions are usually made in cash and not in kind, in order to ensure enjoyment of absolute minimum by all and reasonably decent living standard to each, persons engaged in some form of Bread Labour, must be paid wage enough to satisfy their absolute needs. Thus it follows from Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour as a direct corollary that each engaged in Bread Labour must be paid adequate wage, to have a dignified existence by satisfying his basic needs. Bread Labour and adequate wage are therefore intimately related and constitute the obverse and the reverse of the same issue.

When the issue of minimum living wage of the workers, and artisans of the All India Village Industries Association engaged the attention of the Board of the Association and it was almost agreed that account must be taken of providing balanced diet to the workers that shall include sufficient amount of milk, ghee and vitaminous food, it obtained Gandhi's full support. "If we find" Gandhi said, "that it is not possible for any industry to pay this minimum living wage, we had better close our shop. We should see that in any industry that we handle, the wage covers a reasonable maintenance allowance."<sup>247</sup> Holding the brief on behalf of the spinners Gandhi pleaded later that their wage should be such that the element of exploitation shall be absent from the whole transaction. As Gandhi said, "We have ignored the proletariat for centuries and whilst we have arrogated to ourselves, the right of commanding their labour the thought had never crossed us that they have a right to dictate their wage, that labour is as much their capital as money

is ours. It is time we began to think in terms of their needs, their hours of work and leisure and their standard of living.”<sup>248</sup>

Gandhi considered agricultural operation as the ideal form that Bread Labour can assume. But a practical idealist that he was, he realised that agricultural operation may not be pursued by all because in a country like India, many did not possess sufficient land that they can claim to be their own, which would provide honest and dignified existence to them and their family. Accordingly as it has been referred to earlier, Gandhi said : “This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate, everybody is not in a position to take to it. A person can therefore spin or weave, or take up carpentry, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture however to be the ideal.”<sup>249</sup> The Phoenix Settlement, the Tolstoy Farm and the Satyagraha Ashram, extended the scope of bread labour by including within their periphery, apart from spinning, weaving and carpentry, smithy, shoe-making, printing, grinding of corn, etc. In his Constructive Programme, Gandhi considered engagement in village industries like hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil pressing, etc. as forms of Bread Labour.<sup>250</sup> Hence all these categories of bodily labour or manual work according to Gandhi should be paid almost equal wage. He wrote in the *Harijan*, “All useful labour ought to bring in the same and adequate wage to the labourer.”<sup>251</sup>

Gandhi not only desired that all categories of bodily labour shall be paid equal wage; he went further and advocated that the wage of the manual labourers shall be equal to the wage of the intellectual labourers like civil servants, lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers or statesmen. In his scheme of things, these intellectual labours can not pitch their claim to a higher wage on the basis of the assumed principle of superiority of their work; rather as already discussed, according to Gandhi, only bodily labour entitles one to lay his claim to his livelihood and intellectual labour of different categories of persons like doctors, lawyers, engineers or teachers, however useful for the society, is meant purely for the sake of rendering service to the community and not as sources of self-aggrandisement. These persons shall have to perform some bodily labour in order to earn their eligibility to their livelihood. If that is the ideal

state of things for Gandhi, the intellectual labourers who perform no bodily labour cannot claim wage at a rate higher than that is paid to the people engaged in manual labour or those who perform pure and perfect type of Bread Labour. At best they may claim a living wage which by no stretch of imagination can be more than the wage of manual labourers or a wage equal to that earned by manual labourers. Hence Gandhi advocated that the wage of manual labourers shall be equal to the wage of intellectual labourers like doctors, teachers, engineers or lawyers.

Gandhi derived his inspiration for the concept of equality of wage for different categories of labourers from Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. As per Gandhi's own admission, one of the teaching of *Unto This Last* of Ruskin was : "That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work."<sup>252</sup> Gandhi experimented this principle of equality of wage for all categories of workers for the first time in the Phoenix Settlement. All the inmates received the same living wage and £ 3 was laid down as the monthly allowance per head, irrespective of colour or nationality.<sup>253</sup> In the Tolstoy Farm, the principle of Common Kitchen was introduced and the essential needs of all the inmates were met. All got the same type of food and there was no distinction, between Kallenbach, donor of the 1100-acre land of the Tolstoy Farm, or Gandhi and Joseph Royeppen the barristers, on the one hand and other inmates of the Farm on the other. Even in the Satyagraha Ashram that Gandhi established in India, satisfaction of the basic needs of all the inmates was the guiding principle. Accordingly it has been observed : "He believed in the division of labour or work. But he did insist on equality of wages. The lawyer, the doctor, or the teacher was entitled to no more than the bhangi. There was no other royal road to true civilisation or happiness."<sup>254</sup>

Thus in the socialist society of Gandhian conception whether one works as a farmer or a priest, a teacher or an engineer, a doctor or a bhangi, each shall be entitled to a living wage, and the living wage each shall get shall be more or less the same, due allowance having been made for reasonable differences, in the light of their differential need. Hence it has been observed : "As to this Gandhiji had no doubt that if India was to live an

exemplary life of independence, which would be the envy of the world, all the bhangis, doctors, lawyers, teachers, marchants and others would get the same wages, for an honest day's work."<sup>255</sup>

On the formation of the Congress Government in the provinces, the issue of fixation of ministers' salary at Rs. 1500.00 per month whereas the *chaprasis* drew Rs. 15.00 per month was brought to Gandhi's notice. Gandhi expressed his dissatisfaction at the existence of such disparity. As he said : "All therefore that is possible today is to try to reduce the difference as far as possible."<sup>256</sup> He was convinced that the ministers do not require such fat salaries, and the *chaprasis*' remuneration should be enhanced. The *chaprasis*, felt Gandhi, required a higher salary to keep their body and mind together, and live a decent life. Hence he posed the problem : "Is it possible for the *chaprasi* to support himself and his family on Rs. 15.00 per month without taking bribes ? Should he not be given enough to keep him above temptation ? . . . if we need them we must pay them enough for their requirements. In this way the big gulf that exists between minister and *chaprasi* will be bridged."<sup>257</sup>

To sum up, Gandhi not only advocated the theory of Bread Labour or that each shall earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; it followed from his theory of Bread Labour that each who work with the application of his limb, shall get a wage, sufficient to meet his basic needs. In this respect there shall not be any distinction between the wage of the intellectual workers and those engaged in some form of bodily labour.

The Gandhian concept of wage that follows from his doctrine of Bread Labour far transcends the practices in the Communist countries. In the communist countries the practice is one of distribution of wages on the basis of work, its quality and quantity, and is grounded on the principle of "to each according to his work", although the architects of the system pitch their ambition in the ultimate and the distant ideal of "to each according to his need". But the Gandhian theory of wage, synthesises both the principles, i.e "to each according to his work" and "to each according to his need". Whereas the wage is "need" based, the emphasis is on the "work" of the individual. Both "work" and "need" are the double criteria that are adopted simultaneously to determine the quantum of

wage that one gets. The criterion of "work" is adopted to determine the eligibility whereas the criterion of "need" is the determining factor in respect of the quantum of wage. But unlike the communist practice of discrimination in the matter of wage distribution during the transitional period on the basis of quality and quantity of work, the Gandhian principle of wage is one of equality of wage irrespective of the quality or the quantity of the work performed that accepts as its ideal the ultimate Marxian or Communist objective of need-based wage.

### BREAD LABOUR AND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Labour constitutes the essence of Gandhian socialism and it is in the elimination of the distress and disabilities of labourer and its social and economic elevation that the saner and rationalistic social order of socialism is concerned with. Not only in the ultimate analysis, the interest of the labour, his material and moral uplift is the vision that inspires the socialist thinkers; it is the labour or in the language of Marx the proletariat that plays the most creative and dynamic role in bringing about socialist transformation. Although the Marxian social dynamics, reposes its faith in the pre-ordained and pre-determined inevitability of socialism—its natural and inevitable emergence from the womb of capitalism—it equally recognises the historic role of the proletariat for the establishment of an egalitarian society. But the Proletariat plays a historic role in socialist transformation, by transforming itself into a conscious agent of the historic inevitability of socialism, and by becoming the standard-bearer of the revolution preceding such socialist transformation. The handle of revolution is taken hold of by the Proletariat and the Proletariat by taking hold of the reign of revolution, revolutionises the entire social process, and economic framework, thereby bringing about its own emancipation. Socialists after Marx, Syndicalists and Guild Socialists, repose equal faith on labour although modern communists including Lenin elevate the Party elite to a new height of power and influence. While the Marxists make revolution the vehicle, through which the labour plays its historic role, the Syndicalists make strike the chief instrument of the labour for the necessary change-over.

Gandhi while advocating the theory of Bread Labour and through it, emancipation of the lot and the status of labour, was never a fatalist so as to believe that through any pre-determined and historically ordained process, the labour shall get its due, and shall be assured of his absolute minimum. He considered conscious effort on the part of the labour as much necessary for its own emancipation as Marx and the syndicalists who reposed their faith on violent revolution and strike respectively as the appropriate tools to be wielded and used by the labour for their own deliverance. If it is the right of each labourer engaged in honest bread labour to get his absolute minimum and enough wage to ensure such basic needs, those who are deprived of such absolute needs and such fair wage have equal right and duty to assert their rights to get their claim fulfilled. Like the Syndicalists, Gandhi realised the potency of the method of strike as an instrument to be wielded and utilised by the labourers to obtain redemption from their misfortune.

Gandhi did not preach anything that he did not practise. He himself organised two major strikes, one in South Africa and another at Ahmedabad. Thousands of coal miners of New Castle (South Africa) went on strike at his behest. Gandhi's imprisonment sparked off such discontent in Natal that 20,000 labourers of Natal struck work.<sup>258</sup> The planning and organisation of strike was so elaborately done by Gandhi that the credit for the success of the strike goes to him. Although the Strike of the Textile Mill Workers of Ahmedabad was not Gandhi's brain-child, yet once it started, he not only realised the reasonableness of the labourers' demand for wage increase; he even staked his life for the sake of obtaining such increase. As Gandhi said : "I shall not take any food nor use a car till you get 35 per cent increase or all of you die in the fight for it."<sup>259</sup> Subsequently Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan*, "I consider myself to be an expert in organised strikes. My first successful attempt was made in South Africa, under most adverse circumstances. I improved the technique in Ahmedabad . . . I know that strikes, can be made irresistible."<sup>260</sup>

Thus Gandhi considered it fair and legitimate on the part of the labour to go on strike to press its just claim and obtain its rightful due; yet a pragmatist that he was, considering every-

thing on its merit, Gandhi would not condone strike indiscriminately at all times, and in all circumstances. Every strike according to him shall be judged on its own merit on the basis of the justness of the demand of the workers who contemplate in terms of going on strike or have gone on strike. The primary consideration is therefore fairness of the demand and justness of the dues of the labour.<sup>261</sup> As he said, "The cause of the strike must be just."<sup>262</sup> If the labourers are exploited and are not paid their dues or atleast their absolute minimum, strike becomes a right and so also a duty of the labourers. "Strike, therefore, for the present" said Gandhi "should only take place for the direct betterment of the labourers lot . . ."<sup>263</sup>

As far as the justness of the demand of the workers is concerned Gandhi was as much concerned with the paying capacity of the employers as the basic need and the fair wage of the workers. Unless the employers have the paying capacity, unless there is scope for reasonable return for their capital and enterprise after payment of the enhanced wage that is demanded, the concerns shall be closed down which may bring greater misery to the workers. Therefore the long-term interest of the labour rests not in pitching its demand high so as to make the employer bleed white, but to properly balance its need with the paying capacity of the employer. Gandhi felt that even-handed-justice and morality demanded of the labour as much awareness of the interest of the employer as of its own interest. Hence Gandhi advised the Ahmedabad Mill Workers : "If workers make a demand merely because they feel they have the strength to do so, regardless of the employer's condition it will mean that they have succumbed to the modern demonical justice. At any rate, we want the workers to observe the ancient justice, and its canons as we know them and only thus do we wish to help them to secure their rights."<sup>264</sup>

When Gandhi was requested by the Collector of Ahmedabad to intervene on the issue of mill workers' demand for 50% increase in their pay in form of Dearness Allowance, he on the basis of a thorough inquiry into the condition of the mills, the mill owners, and the workers suggested that "the workers should not demand more than 35 per cent".<sup>265</sup> The workers who were more ambitious and too much militant were presumably not satisfied with Gandhi's formula. To those who considered 35%

increase as inadequate, Gandhi said : "Some workers say that we can demand more than 35 per cent. I say you can demand even a 100 per cent increase. But if you make such a demand it would be unjust. Be content with what you have demanded in the present circumstances. If you ask for more it will pain me. We cannot make an unreasonable demand from any body. I believe that the demand for 35 per cent is just."<sup>266</sup>

Gandhi was thus fastidious about the justness of the strike. Strike may be resorted to only when the labourers' demand is just, measured by the standard of absolute economic minimum of the workers and the employers' capacity to effect such enhancements of wage without affecting adversely the economy of the concern. If balancing of the demand of the workers against the paying capacity of the employers justifies wage increase, strike may be resorted to. Thus before taking a decision to launch the strike, the workers must properly weigh the pros and cons. But once decision on strike has been taken after considering its fairness and justness, retracing the steps or calling off the strike before the fulfilment of the just demand, is denounced by Gandhi, as immoral and unjust. On the issue of the Textile Mill Workers' strike of Ahmedabad, when vacillation among the workers became visible and report reached Gandhi that some of the workers were contemplating resumption of work even before their just demand was fulfilled, Gandhi considered the step so contemplated as breach of faith and breaking of a pledge. In the Leaflet No. 11 Gandhi wrote : "But what is the workers' duty ? They have stated that an increase of 20 per cent is not adequate and have given notice accordingly. They have taken an oath not to accept any thing less than 35 per cent. Under the circumstances, the workers can not go back without compromising his pledge, his honour and his manliness."<sup>267</sup> In the Leaflet No. 12 he further said : "The workers have considered all things before taking the pledge, and now they cannot resume work without securing a 35 per cent increase, whatever may be the temptation or the misery they may have to encounter. Herein lies their honesty. If you weigh a pledge against lakhs of rupees, the weight of the pledge will be greater."<sup>268</sup>

Not only Gandhi considered withdrawal from strike and resumption of work by the labourers before the fulfilment of



their demand a breach of pledge and morally reprehensible; when he witnessed that the workers were at the breaking point and were almost on the verge of resumption of duty, he himself went on fast so as to exert moral pressure on the workers to stand fast and firm on their pledge of continuing the strike until 35% increase in their salary was effected. Thus according to Gandhi, once a decision is taken to start a strike for wage increase after considering the justifiability of the demand, every nerve must be strained to obtain fruition of the just demand.

But if Gandhi considered strike of workers for pressing their just demand justified, he was equally emphatic about the manner of pressing such demand and the form the strike shall assume. The Syndicalists who elevate strike as a strategy to Herculean height, prescribe adoption of the technique of sabotage and paralysis of the economy. They advocate application of the technique of strike with a spirit of wreaking vengeance on the employers, or the capitalists. The strike is based on a spirit of hatred and is perpetrated with the help of violence. As Bertrand Russell has observed : "By far the most important of the Syndicalist methods, is the strike. . . Syndicalists aim at using the strike, not to secure such improvements of detail as employers may grant, but to destroy the whole system of employer and employed, and win the complete emancipation of the worker. For this purpose, what is wanted is the General Strike, the complete cessation of work by a sufficient proportion of the wage earners to secure the paralysis of capitalism."<sup>269</sup> Thus the spirit of hatred, violence and sabotage form the very core of the strike recommended by the Syndicalists.

But Gandhi while commending a just strike, recommends that strikes should be non-violently conducted, with no rancour or bitterness against the employers. For him, strike is meant to be used as an intelligent device, a technique of collective action of the labourers to convince the employers that the economic enterprises are the products of joint endeavour of the employers and the employees and the owners and the workers. The very fact that stoppage of work through strike shall lead to the stoppage of production and the drying out of the spring of wealth of the capitalists shall convince the latter of their helplessness without the co-operation of the labourers. Hence the objective behind the strike is not one of exhibition

of anger and animosity or bitterness and hatred against the employers. Thus while lending moral support to the striking workers of Ahmedabad, Gandhi prescribed for them certain code of conduct which included : He (labourer) will not show anger nor harbour animosity towards his employer."<sup>270</sup> On the next day he exhorted the workers saying, "We can never wish ill of the employers, and in every action of ours, we shall take into consideration their good. We would seek the welfare of the workers, while at the same time, we safeguarded the employers interest."<sup>271</sup>

Thus Gandhi who had a profound faith in the technique of Satyagraha as an instrument for fighting a battle against one's adversary expects that the striking labourers should not adopt malice, hatred, force and intimidation against the employers. As he advised the workers : "If we conduct our struggle . . . with a sense of justice, if we bear no malice towards the employers and we rely always on the right, we shall not only succeed, but good relations between workers and employers will increase."<sup>272</sup>

Thus the technique recommended by Gandhi is not the usual practice of eye for an eye or employment of violence against violence but application of the Gandhian technique of truth and love against the adversary. Hence as against the Marxian or Syndicalist technique of violence or demolition of machinery or sabotage leading to the paralysis of the productive system through go-slow tactics etc. the striking labourers of Ahmedabad resolved "not to cause any disturbance, not to indulge in beating or assaulting, not to commit robbery, not to damage employers' property, not to use abusive language but to remain peaceful".<sup>273</sup>

A true Satyagrahi that Gandhi was, he would not condone the labourers making capital of the employers' distress, taking advantage of the employers' helplessness or attempting the technique of intimidation against the employers. The opponent's embarrassment is never treated as an opportunity by a Satyagrahi. The European railway workers' strike in South Africa synchronised with the strike of the Indian workers and the European workers sought the co-operation of Indian workers to paralyse the government and to bring the Government to their knees. Gandhi the leader of Indian workers on strike and their strategist-in-chief desisted from cashing on the Govern-

ment's trouble. Had the Indian workers joined the European workers the Government would have been forced to come to terms earlier. But Gandhi suspended the Indian workers' strike during the pendency of the railway workers' strike with the avowed intention of not causing any embarrassment to the Government. Accordingly Gandhi has written : "Our workers respected the feelings of the other side, and did not seek to benefit out of the opponent's embarrassment."<sup>274</sup>

The untouchables were Gandhi's Harijans. His real swaraj comprehends their emancipation. He advocated that the sweepers and the bhangis should get as much material benefits from the society as lawyers or doctors. As Gandhi said : "I count myself a Harijan and it pleases me call myself a bhangi among them."<sup>275</sup> He pleaded for enhancement of their material comforts; yet he could not commend adoption of the method of coercion by the bhangis for pressing their demand or obtaining enhancement of their dues. Accordingly he wrote in the *Harijan* on the occasion of the Bombay sweepers' strike, "In spite of my close attachment to sweepers, better because of it, I must denounce the coercive methods they are said to have employed."<sup>276</sup> Work in essential services like cleaning the towns and cities and keeping the atmosphere healthy is a duty that Gandhi considered sacred. Strike in such services with a motive to intimidate the society, so that it shall concede the demand of the strikers was considered by Gandhi unjust and illegitimate. The most honest and honourable method for getting relief is not temporary suspension of work or going on strike, but permanent withdrawal from such service. Hence when all legitimate methods for getting redress of the just grievances fail, Gandhi would suggest : "I claim that in such cases the proper remedy is not a strike, but a notice to the public in general and the employing corporation in particular that the bhangis must give up the sweeping service which consigns, those reserved for that service to a life of starvation and all it means."<sup>277</sup>

Not only strikers should not use violence and intimidation against the employers; violence should also not be used by the striking labourers against those of them who are willing to join work or withdraw their support from the strike. Participation in the strike should be voluntarily undertaken and not imposed

from above with the threat for the real use of coercion. During the Ahmedabad Mill Workers' strike when it came to Gandhi's ears that attempts were being made to prevent those workers who wanted to resume work, through coercion or threat of physical assault, Gandhi wrote : "It is necessary for every worker to remember our resolve that if they bring pressure to bear on their fellows and stop them from going to work by threats, we shall not be able to help them at all. In this struggle, he alone will succeed who keeps to his pledge voluntarily. No one can be forced to keep his honour inviolate. It is essentially a voluntary matter."<sup>278</sup>

If the Gandhian concept of strike shall be devoid of violence, coercion, intimidation and sabotage, the primary motive force is to exert moral pressure on the employers through the adoption of the technique of self-suffering. Gandhi the architect of the theory of Satyagraha whose co-ordinate principles are love for the adversary on the one hand and self-suffering on the other, therefore recommends to the strikers that they should rather undergo self-suffering in form of starvation or loss of work to impress upon the employers the justness of their demand instead of resorting to the dubious method of violence or coercion. Coercion or violence if employed by the strikers shall be physical coercion practised on oneself which shall have its direct impact on the conscience and moral sense of the employer who may concede to the just and reasonable demands of the workers in the form of a wage increase. It is through penance and self-suffering instead of inflicting suffering on the employers that the labourers' just demand can be fulfilled. Hence Gandhi wrote in Leaflet No. 2 issued on the occasion of the Textile Mill Workers' Strike : "Every worker should remember that there is bound to be suffering for him in such a big struggle."<sup>279</sup> As he further said, "If workers are firm in their resolve even the hardest hearts will relent."<sup>280</sup>

Thus Gandhi like Marx and the Syndicalists instead of relying on the inevitability of the emergence of an egalitarian society believed in the conscious effort of labour for the improvement of their own lot. Although a champion of non-violence and a protagonist of Satyagraha, Gandhi was neither a pacifist nor a fatalist but an activist who not only believed in Karma-yoga in form of performance of one's duty but also in form of

conscious positive and creative effort on the part of the labour to obtain redemption from its miserable lot. Strike of workers is not only considered a right of the workers but also a moral obligation, although the strike shall be tempered with a sense of justice, unflinching devotion to the pledge and a determination to continue the strike till the just claim is attained. But unlike Marx and the Syndicalists Gandhi instead of relying on violent action by the labourers and the technique of sabotage, pinned his faith on peaceful, non-violent strike of workers, inspired by absence of hatred for the adversary.

To sum up, Gandhi like Marx not only gives labour a place of pre-eminence in his scheme of things; labour is made the hero in his drama of socio-economic regeneration leading to an egalitarian society. His socialist philosophy not only aims at according a place of dignity to the labour; labour and particularly manual labour becomes the engine for egalitarian re-organisation of the society. But Gandhi while agreeing with the major premises of Marx differs from the latter in respect of the conclusion, that the labour should adopt the technique of violence and forcibly seize the state machine and means of production, distribution and exchange thereby preparing the ground for the sway of the Proletariat and paving the way for the establishment of an egalitarian society. He feels that by mere application of the theory of bread labour, i.e. by making each earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, an egalitarian society can be ushered in. Hence as Gandhi observed : "If this principle is observed, everywhere all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from many a sin."<sup>281</sup>

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## **CHAPTER 7**

# **THE GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF TRUSTEESHIP**

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUSTEESHIP**

It is an essential ingredient of Marxian orthodoxy that the temple of socialism can be built only on the tomb of capitalism. The vision of an egalitarian society is not only inconceivable within the frame-work of capitalism; any attempt to reconcile socialism with the existence of capitalists as such shall be in the nature of a wild-goose-chase foredoomed to failure. Capitalists with their greed and passion for maximisation of profit exploit the proletariat both as producers and consumers by paying the labourers only a subsistence wage and by charging abnormally high price for the products of the industry. By employing labour-saving devices to raise their margin of profit still higher, they push the proletariat to the debris of unemployment. Since their margin of profit and their prospect of prosperity vary in inverse proportion with the misery of the proletariat, an egalitarian society with elimination of the misery of millions is inconceivable within the frame-work of capitalism. Hence Marx observed that with every progress of capitalism, the proletariat and with it the entire society excluding the capitalists, shall sink deeper and deeper into the abyss of poverty, deprivation and destitution. As Marx and Engels wrote in the Communist Manifesto, "And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence, to its slave within its slavery

because it can not help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.”<sup>1</sup>

Not only the welfare of the community or an egalitarian society is incompatible with capitalism; capitalism and capitalists must be liquidated to facilitate the emergence of an egalitarian society. Hence as the Communist Manifesto says, “The Proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, can not stir, can not raise itself up without the whole super-incumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.”<sup>2</sup> Marx and the Marxists pin their faith not only in complete elimination of the bourgeois society and the bourgeois method of production but in the complete liquidation of the capitalists and laissez-faire and monopoly capitalism. As the Marxists of the Communist bloc have demonstrated, not only the system of exploitation and economic violence perpetrated by the capitalist system shall be done away with for the sake of the establishment of an egalitarian society assuring dignity of each individual; capitalists as a class and as individuals must also be completely crushed and liquidated. The concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and naked violence and unbridled terror, that are associated with it, have been devised as much to liquidate the bourgeoisie—the upper and the middle classes—as to establish an egalitarian society. Marxian strategy for socialist transformation therefore not only freely prescribes upsurge of violence against the capitalist system of production and ownership but also against the individual capitalists. Complete liquidation of the capitalists therefore holds the key to the emergence of an egalitarian society of Marxian conception.

But the magnificent edifice of Gandhian Socialism or Sarvodaya encompasses proper utilisation of the capitalist system and individual capitalists and their assimilation in the society and the economic system, so that they provide a solid foundation for the superstructure of socialism. Instead of complete liquidation it visualises wholesale transformation of the capitalist system and complete integration of the individual capitalists in the social structure so that they act as catalytic agents of social change and provide strength and support to the socialist edifice. The process through which the capitalist

system and the individual capitalists shall make themselves the instruments of Gandhian egalitarian revolution is the technique of Trusteeship of the rich or the capitalists.

But what does the term, Trusteeship signify ? As K. M. Munshi has observed : "The trustee as the legal owner carry the burden of ownership, possession and management while the person or object called beneficiary in law is to enjoy its benefits derived from such ownership."<sup>3</sup> Thus the trustee is an owner of property or wealth, who while retaining intact ownership over his possessions shall utilise the same not for his own welfare nor for the welfare of his own people but for the welfare and promotion of the interests and happiness of the person or persons on whose behalf he acts as the trustee. The emphasis is not on the possession or ownership of wealth but its use, utilisation and employment. The objective behind utilisation or employment of such wealth is not material self-satisfaction or self-fulfilment of the owner of such wealth but his ethical and spiritual fulfilment through service to others and fulfilment of the self of those who have reposed their trust on him. As K. M. Munshi has further observed : "Fundamentally therefore the reward to the trustee in undertaking responsibility, legal, moral or spiritual is the same, subjective satisfaction in creating value in the object."<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, under the Gandhian scheme of Trusteeship, the wealthier sections of the community, instead of utilising all the resources at their disposal both material and intellectual, for accumulating their wealth and personal belongings, at the expense of the poor workers and peasants, shall work as the trustees of their superfluous wealth—wealth over and above what they need for a reasonably decent standard of living for themselves and their family members—on behalf of the society and spend the same not for their own comfort, but for the good of the community at large. According to Gandhi if the wealthy and the possessing class acts with a spirit of service and with the mental make-up of trustees the rigour of the capitalist system, i.e. profiteering, exploitation, inequality and poverty for millions in face of plenty for a handful of people, will vanish and the road to socialism shall be duly paved. Hence Gandhi wrote : "Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the



superfluous wealth possessed by them.”<sup>5</sup>

Even in his scheme of free India Gandhi did not completely rule out the continuance of rulers of Princely states and Zamindars, provided they changed their socio-economic outlook and considered themselves as the servants of their people instead of considering themselves as the masters of the latter. If they behaved as Trustees holding their position and power, wealth and property, on behalf of the people and serving the interests of the latter, they may even occupy a very dignified position in independent India. This is evident from what Gandhi wrote under the caption “States and Responsibility” and “States and the People”, in the *Harijan*.<sup>6</sup> Addressing the A.I.C.C. session on August 8, 1942 on the occasion of the adoption of the Quit India Resolution Gandhi reiterated “I have kept a place for the Princes and the Zamindars, in India that I envisage. I would ask the princes, in all humility, to enjoy thorough renunciation. The Princes may renounce ownership over their properties, and become their trustees in the true sense of the term . . . . I would ask the princes, to become servants of the people and render to them an account of their own services.”<sup>7</sup> Speaking on the plan for the formation of a Deccan States Union, Gandhi equally emphatically dealt on the topic of assumption of Trusteeship by the Princes, and their transformation as servants and trustees of the people. As D. G. Tendulkar has observed : “In his opinion, the princes, as servants and trustees of their people were worthy of their hire.”<sup>8</sup>

Severe ridicule has been heaped upon Gandhi for advocating this theory of Trusteeship. Critics from the right and the left are vociferous in attributing motive to this Gandhian concept. “Mr. Gandhi” as has been observed by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar “does not wish to hurt the propertied class. He is even opposed to a campaign against them. He has no passion for economic equality”.<sup>9</sup> E.M.S. Namboodiripad is equally vehement in his condemnation of the Gandhian Trusteeship idea. As he has observed : “His theory of trusteeship, his insistence on certain moral values as the guiding lines for any political activity. . . proved in actual practice, to be of enormous help to the bourgeoisie.”<sup>10</sup> Prof. Hiren Mukherjee in spite of his profound appreciation for Gandhi and the values he cherished, also joined this chorus of disapproval of Gandhian theory of

trusteeship when he wrote : "He was ready to be gentle even with flagrantly self-seeking and fundamentally anti-social vested interests, and in his preoccupation with the right kind of means for social change he would make compromises, and concessions, to the status quo which were often inexplicable, and in their implications as in the idea of the rich being trustees of the poor positively pernicious."<sup>11</sup> Hence as Kishorelal Mashruwala has observed : "Progressive politicians suspected that Gandhiji had obliged the princes, the Zamindars, the capitalists and holders of power by subtly furnishing them with one more weapon to cling to their respective positions of advantage."<sup>12</sup>

The question naturally arises, why did Gandhi advocate continuance of the wealthy as an important limb of the socialist structure of society of his conception ? Is it to be treated as a sign of hypocritical conduct on the part of Gandhi who while advocating emancipation of the lot of the economically underprivileged class, is not prepared to sacrifice the interest of the capitalists and the wealthy sections of the society who are at the root of exploitation and misery of the millions ? Is it to be treated as Gandhi's weakness for the privileged class ? Was Gandhi holding the brief of the capitalists and the wealthy section of the society ? Should Gandhi's advocacy of the Trusteeship of the rich and tolerance of their continuance in the society assigning them a legitimate role in the socialist structure of the society, be viewed as the price that he paid to the capitalists for their contributions for the South African struggle and the Indian War of Independence or supply of the sinews for his Ashrams and the Constructive Programmes ? Did he desire to assign a dignified place in his scheme of things to the business and industrial houses, under the cover of trusteeship ? Does not it compromise his egalitarian principle and the spirit of his Socialism ?

There is no disputing the fact that the industrialists and businessmen made liberal donations for the running of the Ashrams of Gandhi and for implementing his Constructive Programmes and Gandhi had never any moral compunction to accept their donations. Gandhi's Ashram that was set up at Sevagram in 1933 was taken up by G. D. Birla in 1935 and he contributed at the rate of Rs. 50,000 a year for running the Ashram. He contributed a sum of Rs. 1,00,000 to the

Deshbandhu Memorial Fund in 1925 and Rs. 1,00,000 more in 1927 for Gandhi's Khadi, Removal of Untouchability and the educational programme. As it has been observed : "Besides the regular payments for the Ashram at Sevagram, Birla's special donation to topical affairs like Deshbandhu Fund, Kasturba Fund and so on, and his contributions to Bapu's social reforms and rural uplift work ran into millions."<sup>13</sup>

G. D. Birla has himself written : "I was doing my best to support him with money—the commodity which he most lacked—in his struggle to help the depressed classes."<sup>14</sup> He wrote to Gandhi giving the latter a blank cheque : "Whenever you find any particular kind of work impeded for lack of funds, you have only to write to me."<sup>15</sup> Gandhi on his part wrote : "I always hesitate to approach you and your brother for funds because whatever I ask of you I get."<sup>16</sup> It is also our common knowledge that Gandhi had very intimate relationship with the Birlas till he breathed his last and he was assassinated in the Birla House, a part of the vast Birla Estate that was given by the Birlas for use by Gandhi. But it would be too much uncharitable to Gandhi to dub his theory of Trusteeship as a concession to moneyed classes for their liberal donations for the implementation of Gandhian programmes.

Gandhi subscribed to the idea of Trusteeship, much earlier than his association with the Birlas or other millionaires who were sympathetically disposed towards Gandhi, Gandhism and Gandhian programmes. Even during the early part of his public life and initial stage of his career as a practising Barrister, his mental make-up and philosophy of life had accepted Trusteeship as an admirable ideal. The theory of Trusteeship as already indicated earlier, presupposes, surrender of the self of the Trustee and sacrifice of his self-interest in order to serve the interests of the people in whose behalf he acts as the Trustee. Gandhi's letter written to Mr. Taleyarkhan on October 18, 1896 offering the latter to work in partnership with him as a legal practitioner is testimony to the fact that Gandhi was himself prepared to act as a trustee. While assuring Taleyarkhan quite a reasonable and attractive income Gandhi like a trustee offered : "Starting on your own account at once will be out of the question. Your expenses of admission will be paid out of the office. The expenses of your board and lodging

also will be defrayed out of the office earnings. That is to say if there is any loss during the six month's trial it shall be borne by me. On the other hand if there are any profits you share them."<sup>17</sup>

Although Gandhi went to South Africa in search of a vocation, from the very start of his public career, he assumed the role of a trustee working on behalf of the Indians, trying to promote the interests of the socially and economically underprivileged, even at his own expense. He sacrificed his lucrative practice for their sake. As he has written in his *My Experiments with Truth*: "Practice as a lawyer was and remained for me a subordinate occupation."<sup>18</sup> He was the universal "Bhai"<sup>19</sup> of the Indian inhabitants in South Africa, the elder brother responsible for the welfare of the rest. On the occasion of the Black Plague when the Indian Location in Johannesburg was put in flame, he became the custodian of the assets of the Indian inhabitants which ran to the tune of about £ 60,000.<sup>20</sup> A client friend advised Gandhi, "You are our trustee, and must know that if you become a beggar all our public work will come to a stop."<sup>21</sup> Addressing a meeting of the Indians in the Hamidia Islamic Society Hall on December 27, 1907, on the issue of Immigration Restriction Act, Gandhi found fault with Lord Elgin the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, who was a former Viceroy of India for advising the British Government to approve such Act. He is reported to have said: "When he advised His Majesty to sanction this legislation he forgot altogether that he was trustee for the millions of India."<sup>22</sup>

In his letter written to H. S. L. Polak on October 14, 1909 Gandhi expected that the British rulers shall act as the servants of the people and not as their masters or as real trustees and not as exploiters. As he said: "They will be trustees, and not tyrants, and they will live in perfect peace, with the whole of the inhabitants of India."<sup>23</sup> Even after he came back to India and before having contact with the Indian capitalists, he urged upon the kings and princes of India to take note of the poverty of the millions of India, renounce their privileges and act as trustees of the poverty-stricken millions of India. As he said: "There is no salvation for India, unless you strip yourself of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India."<sup>24</sup>

## SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

The Gandhian concept of Trusteeship was neither intended to be used as an instrument to safeguard the vested interests nor has it an element of reformism. It is not a Gandhian apparatus, to "patch up the conflict between landlords and tenants or between labour and capital", so that the sympathies of the capitalists and the landlords are not alienated and a united and solid front of nationalists is forged against the British imperialists at the time of the liberation struggle.<sup>25</sup> As Gandhi made it amply clear, "My theory of trusteeship is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage."<sup>26</sup> He subscribed to the theory of Trusteeship even before his social philosophy possessed socialistic content. It is an emanation of his over-all philosophy of life that was enriched by the cultural heritage of the East and the West and is spiritual and religious, and ethical and social, in nature.

### (a) Indian Cultural Heritage

Speaking about the concept of Trusteeship, Gandhi said : "It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it."<sup>27</sup> Indian philosophy, religion and morals are replete with the idea of trusteeship. The ancient Indian concept of rulers or kings was that of a real Trustee. Ramachandra may be a legendary figure but the philosophy contained in the concept of Ramarajya bears testimony to the fact that under the Indian cultural heritage the rulers, the sources and wielders of power and dignity of a state, are conceived as wielding such power and strength not for their own sake but for the sake of their subjects. Not only Rama was an ideal ruler who sacrificed his conjugal life and family happiness for the sake of providing satisfaction to his subjects; even his father Dasaratha, gave away his young sons to Biswamitra to exterminate the demons who were causing anxiety to the hermits. Even Bharat reigned over Ayodhya during Ramachandra's absence as the latter's trustee.

Lord Srikrishna acted as the Charioteer of Arjuna not with any ulterior motive or expectation of any gain from the battle; he acted as a trustee of Arjuna to give satisfaction to the latter. As it has been observed, "Sri Krishna loved his friend Arjuna not to secure profit or pleasure for himself. He constituted

himself a trustee charged with the responsibility of seeing that Arjuna secured his own fulfilment.”<sup>28</sup>

The heads of Hindu joint families live the life of true trustees. They live and act, exert and exercise power for the common good of the family. “He held the family property and was expected to manage and administer it for the welfare of the family. He was expected to watch with care the advancement of its younger members belonging even to collateral branches and had to give asylum to the orphans, widows and destitutes in the family.”<sup>29</sup>

Gandhi who was deeply steeped in Indian cultural heritage, made uttering of Ramanama a part of his daily rituals and prayer, succumbed to the assassin’s bullets with “Ha Ram” on his lips, made Gita his “Mother”, and lived in an Indian joint family, must have been profoundly influenced by this Indian heritage in respect of his adherence to the concept of Trusteeship.

#### **(b) The Gita and the Upanishads**

Gandhi considered the Bhagavad Gita as his Kamadhenu, his fostering mother from which he derived his life long sustenance. It was like his magician’s touchstone to solve all riddles. As Gandhi has written in his autobiography : “Gita became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference. Just as, I turned to the English dictionary for the meaning of English words that I did not understand, I turned to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials.”<sup>30</sup>

Bal Gangadhar Tilak christened Gita as the “Science of Karmayoga”. According to him the emphasis on Karma stands at the very centre of the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita. But the Karmayoga of which the Bhagavad Gita speaks in so many words at so many places and in so many chapters is concerned not only with Karma but also with freedom from *Kaamana* or desire of fruits of one’s *Karma* or duty, while performing the duty assigned to one’s station in the society. As B. G. Tilak has interpreted the philosophy of Karmayoga, “The Karmayoga described in the Gita is that, even a scient, who has acquired knowledge, must perform the Actions prescribed for the four castes with a disinterested frame of mind . . . and it can never be

a preliminary preparation for Renunciation, because in this path a man can never abandon Action and the only question is obtaining release.”<sup>31</sup>

Gandhi held that the Gita is the science of self-realisation. It holds out the prescription and the formula to “become like unto God”. Accordingly he said : “The object of the Gita appears to me to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realisation.”<sup>32</sup> But what is the prescription and what is the formula for self-realisation ? Gandhi himself a Karmayogi, is the last person, to discern that the essence of the Gita—the universal remedy for self-realisation or salvation—is Sannyasa or renunciation of all *Karmas* or actions. Rather in the light of the Gita he felt that performance of action is inherent in the very nature of life and no life is possible without action. Freedom from action as envisaged in the Gita as a prescription for salvation, according to Gandhi, is therefore not a plea for inactivity or idleness.

In explaining verse 4 of Chapter III of the Bhagavad Gita, Gandhi wrote : “Never does man enjoy freedom from action by not undertaking action, nor does he attain that freedom, by mere renunciation of action. ‘Freedom from Action’ is freedom from the bondage of action. This freedom is not to be gained by cessation of all activity, apart from the fact that this cessation is in the very nature of things impossible.”<sup>33</sup>

Thus Gandhi realised that, if the object of the Gita is, “showing the most excellent way to attain self realisation”, this excellent way does not lie in renouncing all actions. Action must be performed as a matter of necessity, as the very condition of life. As Gandhi explained verse 5 of Chapter III, “For none ever remains, inactive even for a moment, for all are compelled to action by the gunas inherent in prakriti.”<sup>34</sup> But the emphasis throughout the Gita is on non-expectation of fruits of all actions performed or performance of action without expecting fruits thereof. Hence action, if unavoidable and inseparable from life, must be performed with a sense of detachment, having no expectations of fruits. But fruits follow from all actions as necessary corollaries. Whether one desires it or not, fruits follow from all actions. Accordingly the Bhagavad Gita in verse 21 of Chapter IV acknowledges that action without desiring fruits thereof is not enough for a purer life or in

Gandhian terminology for self-realisation. Hence along with desireless action, the emphasis is on non-possession or “Aparigraha” or renunciation of possession, which may accrue to one as a natural consequence of performance of one’s duty. In verse 10 of Chapter VI, there is equal emphasis on “Aparigraha” or renunciation of possession.

Gandhi therefore discovered that “the most excellent way to attain self-realisation” as advocated in the Gita is this renunciation of fruits of action. Hence he wrote : “That matchless remedy is renunciation of fruits of action. This is the centre round which the Gita is woven. This renunciation is the central sun, round which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets.”<sup>35</sup> Thus non-possession or renunciation of possession according to Gandhi is the very core of the message of the Gita. Self-realisation or salvation can be attained only by way of non-possession or shedding all possessions.

Apart from the Bhagavad Gita, Gandhi was also profoundly influenced by the Upanishads and particularly the first verse of the Ishopanishad, a part of which reads “*Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha*”, which means that “Renounce it and enjoy it”. Enjoyment according to this verse follows naturally from renunciation. Renunciation therefore is the cause of enjoyment or enjoyment is the natural corollary of renunciation. Accordingly Gandhi interpreted : “When a man has performed the act of renunciation and dedication, he derives from that act the right of eating, drinking, clothing, and housing himself to the extent necessary for his daily life. Therefore take it as you like, either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation or that the renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, renunciation is essential for our very existence, for our soul.”<sup>36</sup>

Gandhi considered that “the Gita is a commentary on this mantra.”<sup>37</sup> Further he considered the verse as the very essence of Hinduism and said : “I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse, in the Ishopanishad were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever.”<sup>38</sup>

Thus according to Gandhi, renunciation of property or non-possession is the very essence of Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita,



and the Upanishads. All enjoyments or prosperity follow from non-possession. Everything desirable follows from non-possession as a natural corollary. But how this sense of non-possession shall be a practicable proposition to be adopted by each individual for the sake of self-realisation? In this world of narrow egoism, and shrunken loyalty, to expect individuals to dispossess themselves voluntarily is almost a moonshine. Gandhi a pragmatist inspite of his faith in man, was not prepared to believe that individuals shall shed their belongings and strip themselves of their possessions voluntarily for the sake of self-realisation. Particularly most of us lack that much of faith and we are so much engrossed in gross materialism that the advice of non-possession for the sake of self-realisation shall have the least appeal for us. As Gandhi realised, most of us are in the language of verse 12 and 16 of Chapter XVI of the Bhagavad Gita asuric or demonic in nature who "caught in a myriad snares of hope, slaves to lust and wrath, seek unlawfully to amass wealth for the satisfaction of their appetites" and are "tossed about, by diverse fancies, caught in the net of delusion, stuck deep in the indulgence of appetites . . ."<sup>39</sup> Speaking about the influence of Gita on him Gandhi said : "Words like aparigraha (non-possession) gripped me."<sup>40</sup> But he was conscious that it is very difficult to practise non-possession or renounce one's possessions or property. Accordingly he posed the problem : "How was one to divest oneself of all possessions? Was not the body itself possession enough? Were not wife and children possessions? Was I to destroy all the cupboards of books I had?"<sup>41</sup> Necessarily Gandhi was convinced that it is pretty difficult, even impossible to completely dispossess oneself, and renounce one's property and assets, while living in this mundane world with family and children.

### (c) Snell's Equity

Gandhi's study of English law and particularly the law of Equity and more specifically Snell's discussion of Equity came to his rescue. Snell's Equity presupposes erection of a system of Trusteeship whereunder, the legal owner of property may himself hold the property but for the benefit of another person, the real beneficiary of the property. The owner of property

may not renounce his right over the property and may still continue to be its legal owner but he would hold it for the satisfaction of the beneficiaries who for all practical purposes are the real owners. As Snell referred to Professor Ketton's statement : "A trust . . . is the relationship which arises, whenever a person called trustee is compelled in Equity to hold property, whether real or personal, and whether by legal or equitable title for the benefit of some persons or for some object permitted by law in such a way that the real benefit of the property accrues not to the trustees, but to the beneficiaries, or other objects of the trust."

Gandhi now came to realise that the principles of non-possession and renunciation of one's property or possession or assets as advocated in the Gita can be given effect to by way of Trusteeship whereby the propertied people while retaining their property, satisfying their ego that they are proprietors of vast assets can still divest themselves of such possession by holding that property in form of trust for the real beneficiaries. Hence as he has written in his autobiography : "My study of English Law came to my help. Snell's discussion of the maxims of Equity came to my memory. I understood more clearly in the light of the Gita teaching the implication of the word 'trustee' . . . I understood the Gita teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired salvation should act like that trustee who though having control over great possessions, regards not an iota of them as his own."<sup>42</sup>

#### **(d) Family Influences**

Gandhi's family background must have also influenced him in shaping his idea of non-possession and the concept of Trusteeship. His grandfather Uttamchand Gandhi who was working as the Dewan of Porbandar, considered himself as a trustee and gave away almost half of his income to various charities. Large-heartedness was an outstanding trait of his character. On the occasion of the marriage of his two sons, he received huge wedding presents which he surrendered to the Rana or ruler of Porbandar saying : "All these belong to you since they have come from your subjects." The Rana also reciprocated and exhibited the spirit of a trustee by debiting the entire expense to the State exchequer by saying to

Uttamchand Gandhi that the latter's sons were as good as his sons.<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi's father Kaba Gandhi equally practised non-possession in his life. He cared very little for riches and as Gandhi has written in his autobiography : "My father never had any ambition to accumulate riches and left us very little property."<sup>44</sup> When the Thakur of Rajkot whom he was serving offered him the option, to choose a plot of land in the town for his residential purpose, after much persuasion by the Thakur he accepted just a strip of 400 square-yard plot. Apart from practising non-possession, Kaba Gandhi also lived the life of a true Trustee assuming the responsibility of maintaining a large joint family. As it has been observed : "Kaba Gandhi's was a large household. The number of guests who sat down to eat with him, was seldom below twenty. They included not only members of his family but also his guests, secretaries and officials, who together with the members of his own family constituted his wider family."<sup>45</sup> Gandhi's mother Putli Bai took charge of a very large kitchen and "fed everybody first the elders, the children and her in-laws and ate only when she could manage it and from whatever was left after every body had been served."<sup>46</sup>

After the idea of non-possession went deep into Gandhi's mind he practised non-possession in his own life, and wrote to his brother, who was almost like his father, that he would no longer give any financial assistance to the family and that "future savings if any would be utilised for the benefit of the community". When his brother resented such a step Gandhi pointed out : "I was doing exactly what our father had done. The meaning of 'family', had but to be slightly widened and the wisdom of my step would become clear."<sup>47</sup>

Thus this sense of non-possession or non-attachment to property on the part of his forefathers particularly his grandfather, father and mother and their conduct as trustees must have left an indelible impress on Gandhi's character from his early childhood which after receiving further stimulus from the messages of the Gita and the Upanishads and Snell's theory of Trusteeship ultimately blossomed into his theory of Trusteeship.

**(e) Ruskin and Tolstoy**

Apart from the messages of the Indian heritage—the Gita, and the Upanishads—and the influence of his ancestors, the other influences that must have contributed to the shaping of Gandhi's concept of non-possession and trusteeship, are the influences of Ruskin and Tolstoy. Gandhi, whose life and philosophy were profoundly influenced by the life and messages of Ruskin and Tolstoy, must have drawn some inspiration for his doctrine of Trusteeship from the philosophy of these masters.

Ruskin's message contained in his *Unto This Last* that so profoundly influenced Gandhi in transforming his philosophy of life and action, indirectly preaches the philosophy of Trusteeship . . . If he preaches the philosophy of 'social affection' and 'social justice' through the pages of *Unto This Last*, the philosophy of sacrifice and renunciation and acceptance of paternalistic approach were not less significant aspects of his philosophy and message. As per his contention, the people engaged in five great intellectual professions, i.e. the soldiers, pastors, physicians, Lawyers, and the merchants, should be inspired by the objective of defending, teaching, keeping the society in good health, enforcing justice and making provision for the society respectively and should be ready to die even for the sake of properly fulfilling their respective functions. As he said : "And the duty of all these men is on due occasion to die for it."<sup>48</sup> It is not the attraction of fee or the stipend that is the determining factor in keeping them at their respective places. The stipend is no doubt a due and a necessary adjunct but not the object of the life of a true clergy-man or a physician or a merchant. As he said : "All three, if true men, have a work to be done irrespective of fee—to be done even at any cost. or for quite the contrary of fee; the pastor's function being to teach, the physician's to heal and the merchant's . . . to provide."<sup>49</sup>

Particularly pointing at the merchants or the manufacturers, Ruskin urged that they should not only produce purest food at the cheapest cost; it is their duty to make various employments involved in the process of production or distribution, most beneficial to persons employed thereon. As he said categorically : "In his office as governor of the men employed by him,

the merchant or manufacturer is invested with a distinctly paternal authority and responsibility.”<sup>50</sup>

As he further added : “And as the captain of a ship is bound to be the last man to leave the ship in case of wreck and to share his last crust with the sailors in case of famine, so the manufacturer in any commercial crisis or distress, is bound to take the suffering of it with his men and even to take more of it for himself than he allows his men to feel; as a father would in a famine, ship-wreck or battle, sacrifice himself for his son.”<sup>51</sup>

Ruskin inspite of being an advocate of ‘social affection’ and ‘social justice’ was not a champion of equality. As he has himself emphasised in the course of his writing, “If there be any one point insisted on throughout my works more frequently than another, that one point is the impossibility of Equality.”<sup>52</sup> But the inequality of wealth justly established—wealth acquired without injuring the nation in any way during the process of establishment—must be ‘nobly used’<sup>53</sup>, says Ruskin, so as to benefit the nation. That apart Ruskin inspired by the Christian, belief of compassion for fellow-beings while preaching the principle of ‘social affection’ and ‘social justice’, was not an advocate of redistribution of property. Instead he said : “Observe, in these statements, I am not taking up nor countenancing one with the common socialist idea of division of property; division of property is its destruction, and with it the destruction of all hope, all industry and all justice . . . Riches are a form of strength; and a strong man does not injure others by keeping his strength, but by using it injuriously. The socialist seeing a strong man oppress a weak one, cries out ‘Break the strong man’s arms’; but I say ‘Teach him to use them to better purpose’. The fortitude and intelligence which acquire riches are intended by the Giver of both not to scatter, nor to give away but to employ those riches, in the service of mankind; in other words in the redemption of the erring and aid of the weak.”<sup>54</sup> Thus the germ of Gandhian concept of Trusteeship is contained in Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*.

Although the concept of Trusteeship of the privileged class is not explicitly advocated by Tolstoy, so as to be discerned by casual or superficial readers, his writings breathe a spirit of Trusteeship of the upper strata of the society. Tolstoy, who

felt that the "sole meaning of human life lies in serving the world", "in establishing the greatest possible unity among all living beings", and in the subordination of one's duty to one's family or the state to "universal life", and a truly righteous and virtuous life can be lived by giving unto others more than what one demands from them, advocated : "Divide up what you possess with others, do not gather riches."<sup>55</sup> An original thinker philosopher and an artiste, he had the practical common sense to see that although renunciation of one's property, and sharing that with others constitute the ideal type of conduct for forging the greatest possible unity among all living beings and for serving the Kingdom of God, it is pretty difficult for many to practise it in real life. As he said : "Were you to do this you would be doing the very best thing possible but it may be as is most likely that you have not the strength. You have ties, a family, dependents and superiors; you are under such powerful influences that you are not strong enough to shake them of."<sup>56</sup> Accordingly he has written : "I do not say that if you are a landowner you are bound immediately to give your land to the poor; if you are a capitalist to give your money or your factory to the work people."<sup>57</sup> Hence what he urged upon them is a change in their attitude and approach so as to "perceive the truth and profess them", and be conscious of a sense of social responsibility. While condemning the privileged class for their covetousness, vanity, ambition and insolence and questioning them "who has made you a nurse in charge of this sick system ?", he meant by implication that they should act as the "nurse" and the caretaker of a healthy system having been inspired "with the self-sacrificing aim of maintaining an order of life necessary for the welfare of mankind."<sup>58</sup>

Thus Tolstoy expected, although not very explicitly, that the privileged section of the society should act as trustees. Not only did he expect that they should act as the nurse and caretaker or trustees of the social system; he was hopeful that the privileged class would so behave. He was convinced that although a majority of rich men are "selfseeking or coarse money-grabbers only concerned with enriching themselves," many would voluntarily abandon their position of vantage, relinquish their property and serve as the guardian and protector, benefactor and trustee of the societal interest. As he

said : "Rich men are reluctant to use their wealth for themselves alone and disburse it for public purposes. Landowners build hospitals and schools on their land, and some of them even renounce the ownership of land and transfer it to the tillers of the soil or establish communities on it. Mill-owners and manufacturers arrange hospitals, schools, savings banks and pensions as well as dwellings for their work people . . . There are capitalists who devote part of their capital to educational, artistic, philanthropic and other public institutions. Others unable to bring themselves to part with their wealth during their life time leave it to public institutions after their death."<sup>59</sup>

Not only Tolstoy realised that many rich men of his days were acting as self-sacrificing agents of the interests of the poor; he also felt that the Christian virtue of compassion for suffering fellow-beings, would gradually permeate the entire higher strata of human society. Accordingly he has written : "All these facts might appear accidental, did they not all come from one common cause, just as it might seem accidental that in spring the buds begin to swell on some of the trees, if we did not know that this is caused by the coming of spring generally and that if the buds have begun to swell on some of the trees they will certainly do so on all of them."<sup>60</sup>

Thus Tolstoy realised that richer sections of the society can be useful "only in proportion as they cease to be personal managers of their wealth and give the community all or at least part of it"<sup>61</sup>, or live like managers of social interests or trustees of the society.

Not only did Tolstoy advocate that the richer sections of the society should act as the managers of their wealth for promoting social interest; he himself lived the life of such a "manager" or a trustee. Realising that "property is the root of all evil" he not only renounced his own property—the vast Yasnaya Polyana estate in favour of the peasants; he even acted as a trustee of the poor peasants and a widow who could not afford to engage hired labour, to till their soil and did physical labour in their farm. Besides, he even considered his superior intellectual calibre and literary faculty as a property of the community and himself as a trustee thereof on behalf of the society. His literary creations were equally considered as the property of the society and he issued an announcement

transferring the copyrights of all his literary products after 1881 to the community permitting the public to freely publish it without payment of any royalty either to himself, his wife or his children. Thus Tolstoy by implication advocated the trusteeship of the rich.

Hence this happy synthesis of domestic, indigenous, and foreign influences—the influences of his parents and ancestors, the Indian cultural heritage represented by social customs, the Gita and the Upanishads, and the influences of the foreign masters like Tolstoy and Ruskin and that of Snell's Equity—forged the foundation of the Gandhian concept of renunciation, non-possession and Trusteeship.

But the most significant aspect of Gandhi's allegiance to the concept of non-possession or renunciation of possession leading to the doctrine of Trusteeship of the rich and the possessing class from our standpoint is that it not only provides a solution for the problems of individuals' life, his self-realisation and salvation and acts as a very potent weapon for the elevation of the self from a lower to a higher plane; such non-possession and Trusteeship when practised by the possessing class, may prove a safe and sure method for a social revolution leading to the emergence of an egalitarian society. The bourgeois society goes in default and fails to solve the problems of technologically viable and economically prosperous economy because of the egocentrism and sense of social apathy of the privileged class. If the possessing classes, realised Gandhi, give a better account of themselves, shed their selfishness, renounce their sense of possession, and act as trustees for the superfluous wealth that they possess on behalf of the society, the problems of the inequalitarian society can be easily resolved and the road to socialism shall be duly paved. Hence as Gandhi wrote in *Young India* : If Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines, there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that the ryot possesses the same soul that they do, and their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor. They must regard themselves even as the Japanese nobles did as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the ryots."<sup>62</sup>

Thus Gandhi reposed his faith in the technique of voluntary non-possession or renunciation of their possession by the wealthy



section of the society and their voluntary assumption of the role of Trustees instead of their forcible dispossession, confiscation or liquidation, for socialist transformation. Hence as it has been observed : "Gandhi admires the communist ideal but he would prefer a religious type of communism, voluntarily brought about. Private property may go as a result of voluntary acceptance of the ethical ideal of non-possession by the people."<sup>63</sup>

### BASIS OF THE TRUSTEESHIP SYSTEM

The theory of Trusteeship of Gandhi deriving its inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, Indian cultural heritage, Snell's Equity, and the life and messages of Tolstoy and Ruskin stands on a pentagonal pedestal, the five pillars being provided by his concept of Sarvodaya and particularly the moral uplift of all, his theory of Bread Labour, his doctrine of non-violent socialism, his faith in the goodness of all individuals and their reformability, and the pragmatic consideration that Trusteeship is more conducive to real socialist objective than any other method.

#### (a) Sarvodaya and Trusteeship

The Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya conceives of the welfare of all and all-round and balanced development of each individual. It is concerned, as much with the emancipation of the rich as of the poor and as much with the upliftment of the privileged and economically prosperous as with the development of the underprivileged and materially helpless and deficient beings; yet as it has been discussed in detail in the chapter on Sarvodaya, the welfare of the rich and the privileged lies not in their further material prosperity or economic emancipation, but in their spiritual and moral redemption and regeneration. Gandhi was convinced that accumulation of wealth by any individual is inconceivable, without exploitation and violence. As he has said : "Such accumulation by private persons was impossible except through violent means . . ."<sup>64</sup> Accumulation of wealth was therefore conceived by Gandhi as unethical, immoral and a sin from which individuals must be liberated.

The bounties of a nature, felt Gandhi, are meant for the

good of God's creation, for the benefit of the entire world. Each is entitled to acquire only that much of wealth or property that is essential for his immediate need or his existence. None has a right to acquire more than what is needed to satisfy his absolute and immediate needs, particularly when millions are unable to satisfy their most basic requirements. Hence having in view the interests of millions of those who are living a sub-human existence, Gandhi said : "You and I have no right to any thing that we really have until these . . . millions are clothed and fed better."<sup>65</sup>

To acquire and accumulate more than what is needed to satisfy one's immediate need was treated by Gandhi as a theft. Hence Gandhi has written : "Therefore whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft "<sup>66</sup>

Thus Gandhi subscribed to the view that no individual has a right to acquire more than his "legitimate need" or "honourable livelihood". Any acquisition beyond or above such legitimate need or "honourable livelihood" is a sure sign of moral degeneration and spiritual decay. Man's all round welfare and his balanced development require liberation from such decay and degeneration through obtaining release from possession of wealth and property beyond one's absolute needs.

Gandhi as a pragmatist did not lose sight of the fact that even if one does not intentionally acquire more than his legitimate need, or amass wealth at the expense of others he may become owner of vast property by way of inheritance or by way of legacy. But Gandhi was not prepared to condone enjoyment of such inherited wealth. As he has written : "Personally I do not believe in inherited riches."<sup>67</sup>

Besides, as Gandhi said : "Inequalities in intelligence, and even opportunity will last, till the end of time."<sup>68</sup> An industrious man with more than average intelligence, may acquire by legitimate means, more property than idlemen, and men of average or below average intelligence even without resorting to violence and exploitation. As Gandhi has written : "It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without consciously doing wrong, for example I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land."<sup>69</sup> Some time earlier he also wrote in form of a reply to Shankar Rao Deo who raised an issue

whether crores can be earned by legitimate means : "Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches . . . If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means."<sup>70</sup> But although such wealth or property may be legitimately acquired without violence and without exploitation, Gandhi was not prepared to accept it as a source of one's real happiness and his balanced growth. Rather he felt that such possessions and such affluence stand as stumbling blocks on the way of self-realisation and blossoming of an integrated personality and all-round development of the individual since worship of the mammon and cultivation of manliness do not go hand in hand. As a remedy for such an untenable position arising out of the possession of wealth flowing into one's purse, almost without any conscious effort on his part for the accumulation of the same, Gandhi suggested cultivation of a spirit of detachment for wealth and utilisation for oneself only a portion of it that is needed for meeting one's "legitimate need" and "honourable livelihood". As Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* : "Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth by way of legacy or by means of trade and industry . . . I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood no better than that enjoyed by millions of others."<sup>71</sup>

But the question naturally arises, what is to be done with the wealth that remains beyond what is required to provide an honourable livelihood ? How this surplus wealth shall be utilised ? Gandhi himself a liberated soul, who renounced his wealth for the sake of an ideal and for satisfying his intellectual conviction that the acquisition of wealth beyond and above one's absolute need is a theft and a sin, would perhaps expect of all others identical conduct. As already indicated earlier, under the influence of the Gita and the Upanishads Gandhi would consider renunciation of one's possession or non-possession of one's wealth as an admirable ideal to be aimed at. But a practical idealist that he was, he realised that it is highly painful to renounce one's wealth and strip oneself of all the possessions except one's absolute minimum. Possession itself gives a sense of satisfaction and security and people normally

are hesitant to part with it. The solution according to Gandhi therefore lies in shedding possessiveness, if not possession, and greed for wealth if not wealth itself. The owners of wealth may still hold their wealth but consider their superfluous wealth as the property of the community and themselves as the trustees of such wealth to be utilised for the benefit of the community. As Kishore Lal Mashruwala has very appropriately observed : "On this matter (matter of private property) Gandhiji has perhaps more radical views than the most extreme communists. He would like to dispossess every person of all kinds of belongings. If he tolerates the institution of private property, it is not because he loves it, or holds it to be necessary for the progress of humanity but because he has yet to discover a truthful and non-violent method of abolishing that institution. I think that all socialists believe that possessions are absolutely essential to make mankind happy. Gandhiji does not accept that position in theory. But as a practical proposition he feels that mankind is not going to give up possessions within a time which can be estimated."<sup>72</sup> As Gandhi himself has said : "I accept the proposition that it is better not to desire wealth, than to acquire it and become its trustee. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed their desire for wealth ? I can only say to them, that they should use their wealth for service "<sup>73</sup>

Thus Gandhi accepted Trusteeship as a practical proposition which shall liberate the wealthy and the possessing class of their sin of acquisitiveness and greed and effect a changeover in favour of egalitarian society. Hence elaborating the Upanishadic mantra *Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha* he said : "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs and use the remainder for society."<sup>74</sup>

Thus the wealthy sections of the society were urged by Gandhi to renounce their greed and possessiveness, if not their wealth and possession. Hence Gandhi said : "I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession and to come down inspite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour."<sup>75</sup> This act of holding one's surplus wealth—wealth beyond what is absolutely necessary for one's survival at a reasonably high level of living, consistent with the level of

living of the community as a whole—and its utilisation for the benefit of the society is an act of Trusteeship. As Gandhi said : “When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God’s people.”<sup>76</sup> He further said : “The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society.”<sup>77</sup>

Thus the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya or the welfare of all and all-round and integrated development of each, led him step by step to adopt the technique of Trusteeship. As Gandhi said : “Man’s ultimate aim is the realisation of God and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all.”<sup>78</sup>

In another connection Gandhi also wrote : “Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellowmen.”<sup>79</sup> Hence as Gandhi believed a full life, a fully integrated life, and a truly noble life, blossoms forth not through acquisition of wealth and amassing of fortune but through “realisation of God” which can be attained by way of “service of all human beings” and “performance of works for the welfare of . . . fellowmen”. If such a fully integrated life for all is the objective of Sarvodaya, and Trusteeship of one’s wealth and its utilisation for the service of all human beings promotes such a fully integrated life, Trusteeship of the rich follows as a natural corollary of the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya.

#### **(b) Bread Labour and Trusteeship**

Gandhi’s concept of Bread Labour also contributed to his theory of Trusteeship. According to the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour each individual must perform sufficient labour in order to entitle himself to lay his claim on his bread. As Gandhi said : “The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food.”<sup>80</sup> Labour is therefore the only passport to one’s living and those who do not perform any labour are not entitled to their bread.

But what is most significant in Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour is that labour entitles one to get his bread, does not entitle him to get more than his bread in return for his work. All those who perform labour acquire legitimate right according to Gandhi to get their bread but acquisition of anything more than one's absolute need cannot be legitimately claimed. He felt that if all laboured adequately to earn their bread and acquired in return only enough to meet their absolute and immediate need, much of the problems of this inegalitarian society shall be automatically resolved. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : "If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be no cry of overpopulation, no disease and no such misery as we see around."<sup>81</sup>

Thus under Gandhi's scheme of Bread Labour, no body is entitled to get more than his absolute and essential need. Yet Gandhi was conscious of the fact that both physical and intellectual ability differs from man to man. Some are capable of working with greater vigour and energy than others and their labour sincerely performed and honestly executed, may prove more productive of material wealth than that of others who are less energetic and enterprising. Besides, people with better intellectual ability and vigour, creativity and ingenuity, may devise ways and means for greater material prosperity and intellectual excellences of the nation. The material prosperity and progress of the nation depend upon enthusiastic performance of functions by such capable, energetic, enterprising and imaginative individuals and not on the half hearted work of the idlers and sickly, and the mentally deficient citizens. Hence Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour does not imply that men of greater ability and vigour shall not work more than what is necessary to earn their absolute minimum. It also does not propagate the idea that men of more than average physical strength and vigour, resourcefulness and enterprise, intellectual ability and excellence, shall allow their additional ability and energy to be frittered away or wasted. Nor does it fix a premium or idleness, inactivity, inefficiency, mental incapacity and intellectual deficiencies. Gandhi a pragmatist, an activist and a fighter himself, realised that the society shall be poorer, unless such men of ability keep themselves active throughout. Hence he said : "We do not want to produce a dead equality

where every person becomes, or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish.”<sup>82</sup>

What Gandhi really wanted is that such individuals with more than average, or unusual ability shall work as per their capacity but shall get in return for themselves only what is required for fulfilling their legitimate needs. In other words while working with full vigour, only a fraction of their work shall be meant for themselves whereas the rest shall be for the community. As Gandhi said : “Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies, or through their minds but all this will be labour of love for the common good.”<sup>83</sup>

Thus Gandhi’s concept of Bread Labour carried to its logical conclusion goes a step ahead, of the provision for work and payment in the Soviet Constitution. Whereas the Soviet Constitution wants to apply the maxim “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work,” Gandhi’s concept of Bread Labour conceives of “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” Men of greater physical vigour and intellectual ability shall act as per their ability but shall get their reward in proportion to their need. In connection with the quantum of remuneration that shall be paid for intellectual labour Gandhi wrote : “Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal State, doctors, lawyers, and the like will work solely for the benefit of society and not for self.”<sup>84</sup> What he spoke about intellectual labour is also applicable to greater physical vigour, industrial and business acumen and enterprise. Such additional ability should not demand any payment and shall be treated as endowment from heaven meant to be held in trust and the possessors should treat themselves as divinely appointed trustees to act for the benefit of the society. If payment is received for such superior or additional physical and mental ability the amount so received should be held as the property of the community or as a trust property to be expended for the good of the society.

Thus Gandhi’s concept of Bread Labour makes the more capable persons trustees of their additional ability, beyond and above what is needed to earn their livelihood, on behalf of the society utilising them for the benefit of the society. As Gandhi

wrote : "If all worked for their bread distinctions of rank would be obliterated; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and use it mainly in the public interest "85

Hence Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour amply contributed to his doctrine of Trusteeship.

### **(c) Gandhi's Faith in Man and Trusteeship**

The Marxian technique of violent revolution and liquidation of the privileged class stems from Marx's premise that the bourgeoisie as a class, is highly selfish, self-seeking and egoistic and is primarily concerned with its own interest. It had according to Marx swept away all values and all "ancient and venerable prejudices" for the sake of rising itself to power, and has profited itself at the expense of the entire community. Its entire approach is founded on gross materialism and naked self-interest. As Marx wrote : "The bourgeoisie wherever it has got the upper hand has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors' and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism in the icy water of egoistical calculation."86

The bourgeoisie are so much self-conscious, egoistic, materialistic and devoid of any sense of higher social value that they are not expected according to Marx to shed such essential aspects of their character. Even if Marx acknowledged that some petty-bourgeois intellectuals some times champion the cause of the proletariat, they do so according to him not with a philanthropic motive but to safeguard their own interest. As Marx wrote, "the lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie to save from extinction their existence as fraction of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but



their future interest . . . . .”<sup>87</sup>

Thus according to Marxian estimation, the privileged classes, whether the class of upper bourgeoisie, middle bourgeoisie, artisans, prosperous peasants or intellectual aristocracy, are too much stepped in their self-interest to think of anything other than their own welfare. To speak of their compassion for the society, is a mere self-deception. It is a sheer moonshine to expect of these classes renunciation of privileges for social good. The privileged classes can not be expected to change their nature in any circumstances. No modification of their selfish, self-centred and exploitative character is conceivable. The privileged people are beyond reform and beyond redemption. The only method therefore according to Marx to undo the uneven social balance based on the dichotomy of privilege and poverty is elimination and liquidation of the privileged classes by violence.

Gandhi on the other hand started with a completely different notion about the nature of human beings to which the bourgeoisie of the Marxian conception or the capitalists are no exception. He had profound faith in the basic goodness of human beings. Individuals as sparks of the Divine, and the All Perfect being are themselves basically good. That is why Gandhi said : “The individual is the one supreme consideration.”<sup>88</sup> If some individuals are found depraved or deficient, Gandhi attributed such depravity or deficiency to their defiled environment. Thus Gandhi believed that the “wrong doer is often the tool of a system or a victim of the circumstances.”<sup>89</sup> Left to himself, unsullied by environment, each individual shall exhibit the Divinity in his character. Inspired by such profound faith Gandhi wrote : “I refuse to suspect human nature.”<sup>90</sup>

His faith in human nature led Gandhi to love the British people inspite of hatred towards British imperialism and the British system of exploitation which is so assiduously combated. As Gandhi said in the context of non-co-operation with British Imperialism : “Non-co-operators never told the people that the British or General Dyer were bad, but that they were victims of a system. So that the system must be destroyed and not the individual.”<sup>91</sup> As he further said : “I have discovered that man is superior to system he propounded. And so I feel, that Englishmen as individuals, are infinitely better than the system, they have evolved as a corporation.”<sup>92</sup> To a question

by a foreign visitor whether Englishmen would leave India, as a result of non-violent agitation, non-co-operation and Satyagraha, Gandhi's reply was a firm "yes". To the supplementary, as to the basis of his belief Gandhi replied: "I base my faith in God, and His Justice." But his faith in God, kindled his belief in the basic goodness of all human beings who are but sparks of the Divine flame, and the British people who were ruling over India were not exceptions to it. As Gandhi said in reply to the critics who doubted British withdrawal from India voluntarily, "Your difficulty arises from your disinclination, to believe that Britain can ever do justice voluntarily. My belief, in the capacity of non-violence rejects the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature."<sup>93</sup> Gandhi even believed that, the Indian princes shall voluntarily surrender their power and privileges. In reply to Jayaprakash Narayan who had grave doubts about it Gandhi wrote: "Perhaps Shri Jayaprakash has no faith in the prince automatically surrendering their autocracy. I have . . . because they are just as good human beings as we are."<sup>94</sup>

Gandhi had also ample faith in the self-less and self-sacrificing nature of the capitalists, the bourgeoisie and the privileged classes. The privileged people or the capitalists, Gandhi believed, were exploiting the toiling millions, and were living at the latter's expense not because they are fundamentally bad but because they had become victims of the evil system that goes by the name of capitalism. There is a finer, subtler, and a more vital chord according to Gandhi in every human heart that is noble, self-sacrificing and full of compassion for others. Sometimes the dust of greed, selfishness and egoism may accumulate on this chord, but properly handled this subtle chord in human heart shall transmit the melodious music of sacrifice, self-suffering and renunciation for the benefit of others. Hence Gandhi said: "There are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord we bring out the music."<sup>95</sup> Besides he said later: "We must appeal to the good in the human beings and expect response."<sup>96</sup> Accordingly Gandhi did not advocate elimination or liquidation of the capitalists but of the capitalistic system of exploitation and acquisitiveness. He was an enemy of capitalism but not of capitalists. As he said: "I do not fight shy of capital, I fight capitalism."<sup>97</sup>

Depending upon the divine impulse in the capitalists and the privileged people Gandhi wrote : "I am for the establishment of right relations between capital and labour . . . . I do not think there is any antagonism between them."<sup>98</sup> Since he did not comprehend any antagonism between the capitalists and labourers and had profound faith in man and his selflessness, he believed that the wealthy sections of the society inspired by a sense of compassion for the fellow-beings may act as trustees of their superfluous wealth on behalf of the community. Hence as Gandhi said : "I have always said that my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers, but their moral welfare also—capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them."<sup>99</sup>

Apart from his faith in man, his faith in the reformability of every human being however depraved and degraded, contributed to his theory of Trusteeship. Since all individuals are basically good, and only adverse circumstances and evil system taint their conduct and character, these stains in human character are very much superficial and transitory which can be removed with conscious human effort, and human character thereafter will dazzle once again. Hence Gandhi has written : "One must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved being reformed under human and skilled treatment."<sup>100</sup> Speaking on Jawaharlal Nehru's approach to capitalism and class-war Gandhi said while addressing the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangha at Hubli in Belgaum in April, 1937, "No doubt, capital is lifeless, but not the capitalists who are amenable to conversion."<sup>101</sup>

Thus Gandhi's profound faith in man and the reformability of each individual however fallen and depraved he may be, led him to accept the position that the capitalists and the privileged people in the society, even if they are normally egoistic, selfish, and exploitative in nature when properly handled can be made to serve the interest of the society, by way of renouncing their possessions and privileges and acting as the Trustees. As Gandhi said : "I have sought the friendship of the capitalists in order to induce them to regard themselves as trustees for the benefit of the labourers, and that they may take their own

food feeding them.”<sup>102</sup>

**(d) Doctrine of Non-Violence and the Concept of Trusteeship**

Gandhi's concept of Trusteeship also follows as a direct corollary of his doctrine of non-violent socialism or socialism through the application of non-violent technique. As an apostle of non-violence he wanted to establish an egalitarian society devoid of exploitation and violence and based on equality, fraternity, and fellowship, and hence he desired to banish violence completely as a part of his technique. As an uncompromising opponent of the violent technique, he said: “Our socialism or communism should therefore, be based on non-violence.”<sup>103</sup> But this reliance on non-violence made him an advocate of Trusteeship which Gandhi comprehended would be able to solve the problems both of acquisitive society and communist state.

According to Gandhi, non-violence is not a negative concept implying absence of violence. Understood in its positive sense, non-violence stands for positive and universal love, for family members, friends and relatives, and even adversaries. Love, indiscriminately practised therefore represents non-violence in its perfected form. Accordingly Gandhi wrote: “In its positive form, Ahimsa means the largest love . . . . . If I am a follower of Ahimsa, I must love my enemy . . . . .”<sup>104</sup> But the question naturally arises how shall this love manifest itself? How can one express such indiluted love for friends and adversaries? What form shall this love assume? Gandhi knew that the root of love and non-violence rests on selflessness<sup>105</sup> In order to practise perfect Ahimsa or love, one must first practise complete selflessness since, the bondage of self and the passion for self-aggrandisement, prompts one to commit all sorts of violence, both physical and mental and love for others is sacrificed thereby. Thus Gandhi wrote: “Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession.”<sup>106</sup> Since love is the positive aspect of non-violence or Ahimsa, Gandhi also expressed the same view when he said: “In its positive form, ahimsa means . . . . . greatest charity.”<sup>107</sup>

Thus according to the concept of non-violence, that was

Gandhi's universal remedy for all ills, non-possession or renunciation of possession and practice of charity are the real norms to measure the extent of love or non-violence one practises in his social conduct. To the extent one renounces his possession or property and practises charity for the sake of the community, he rises in the scale of non-violence or love. The true believers in non-violence shall therefore renounce their possessions, if they have more than their absolute need, for the sake of their fellow-beings. As Gandhi said : "As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earning and there is Ahimsa in his venture."<sup>108</sup>

But a practical idealist that he was, he never failed to visualise that it is difficult, almost impossible for many to completely identify their interests with those of the society and make complete renunciation of their possessions, although such complete non-possession, as an ideal, is a lofty and laudable one. As he said : "In actual life we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession, will remain, an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive."<sup>109</sup> Hence like Aristotle instead of simply hovering in the clouds, Gandhi thought of a second best, a practicable solution. Even if complete renunciation is not a practicable proposition for many members of the possessing class, those who have been inspired by the philosophy of non-violence and love must ceaselessly strive to attain the ideal. If complete non-possession is not practicable a believer in non-violence and universal love may take the preliminary step in that direction by renouncing possessiveness and greed, developing a sense of detachment for wealth and possession and leading an unostentatious life devoid of avoidable comforts and luxuries. As Gandhi said : "The first step towards it (non-violence) is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of

life . . . . There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life.”<sup>110</sup>

Thus a believer in positive non-violence, when inspired by the spirit of love, shall renounce all personal enjoyment and indulgence, of course making due allowances for his basic needs. Now the question arises, if a believer in non-violence has shed acquisitiveness and greed and has reduced his wants to minimum, what shall he do with his superfluous wealth that remains after meeting his absolute needs, taking for granted that complete renunciation of the surplus is an impractical proposition? Such believers in non-violence while holding on to the surplus wealth may practise non-possession by utilising such superfluous property for the good of the community. Hence Gandhi expected that those of the possessing class who shall be inspired by this spirit of non-violence and positive love, shall practise the principle of Trusteeship in their life. Accordingly Gandhi suggested: “The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a Trustee for the remainder to be used for society.”<sup>111</sup> Thus the Gandhian theory of non-violence and practical non-possession suggests adoption of the doctrine of Trusteeship.

Gandhi's doctrine of non violent socialism also justified his concept of Trusteeship from another angle. Socialists particularly of the Marxian brand repose their faith in too much of state activity or concentration of economic power in the hands of the state. The state becomes the chief producer and employer and sole regulator of all economic activities; but under such a system of complete state ownership and control, the individual is subjected to too much of violence. Gandhi who felt that the state was the very personification of violence and apprehended that its potentiality to commit violence may be accentuated and magnified if economic powers are concentrated in the hands of the state, thought of Trusteeship as an alternative device to effect socialist transformation. As he wrote: “It (state ownership) is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the evils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents, violence, in a concentrated, and

organised form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soul-less machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.”<sup>112</sup>

Gandhi's concept of non-violence and universal love, therefore amply justified his theory of Trusteeship. As has been observed by Dr. Gajendragadkar: “The great exponent of Ahimsa that he was, he did not tolerate the idea of the inevitability of class conflict and the indispensability of strikes and lockouts. He thought that if the employers and industrialists treated themselves as trustees, the problem of evolving industrial harmony and making economic justice a reality could be solved non-violently on the strength of the doctrine of love.”<sup>113</sup>

#### **(e) Pragmatic Consideration and Trusteeship**

Above all Gandhi also justified trusteeship of the rich from the standpoint of pragmatic considerations. As a practical idealist Gandhi realised that the economy of India, that stood during his time in a state of underdevelopment, would not be able to usher in an egalitarian society of affluence if the entire economy is taken over by the State, either by way of confiscation or on payment of compensation. Real Swaraj of his conception comprehends not only equality and social justice but their proliferation in the context of fulfilment of the basic economic minimum of all which according to Gandhi meant, nutritious food, a decent house, medical care, enough clothing and adequate resources for the education of one's children. But mere transfer of economy from the private hand to the state can not ensure, such a minimum. On the other hand it presupposes sufficient production in different sectors of economy, or making different sectors of economy work with full vigour and efficiency. To ensure the same the economy must be handled by men of ability, enterprise, experience, business acumen and industrial and commercial knack. The failure of militant communism to provide the country a higher level of consumption and prosperity during the early years following the Bolshevik Revolution and subsequent introduction by Lenin of the New Economic Policy with a reasonable measure of freedom to the peasants to produce and sell their stuff and permission to engage in private trading, are positive pointers that mere transfer of ownership from the

private entrepreneurs, agriculturists, or industrialists to the State is not enough to ensure maximum production, higher level of consumption and enough prosperity to the nation.

Gandhi, although an idealist and a visionary, devoid of commercial psychology, did not fail to grasp that economic prosperity demands handling of economic enterprises by men of experience and business and industrial acumen, who have the experience of floating, managing and running, industrial and commercial enterprises. Even if an idealist, Gandhi was pragmatic enough to realise that although the acquisitive and exploitative nature of capitalists and capitalism are reprehensible and condemnable, capital as a factor of production is essential and accumulation of capital that is essential for the prosperity of the nation is a science and an art that can not be mastered by anybody and every body. On the other hand he believed that if the wealthy, possessing and moneyed classes who know the technique of floating, managing and running economic enterprises, make money and accumulate wealth, are allowed to manage such enterprises, make it profitable concerns, earn reasonable profit by just and legitimate means and use the surplus wealth so produced—wealth over and above what is needed to satisfy their essential and legitimate needs—for the good of the society, acting as trustees thereof, the society shall be richer. Accordingly Gandhi said: “We must not under-rate the business talent and know-how, which the owning class have acquired, through generations of experience and specialisation.”<sup>114</sup>

Thus Gandhi wanted to take advantage of the ability of the wealthy and the possessing classes or the capitalists. He wanted to devise a method whereby capitalists shall shed their greed, egoism and acquisitiveness and lend their services to the cause of the society. Instead of killing the goose that lays golden eggs, he wanted to domesticate it and make it serve the objective of an egalitarian society. The method for domesticating the capitalist goose is the technique of Trusteeship. Hence as Gandhi said: “In the nature of things some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will earn more and they will utilise their talents for this purpose. If they utilise their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as Trustees, on no other



terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings, must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees."<sup>115</sup> Writing about a decade and half after, Gandhi gave vent to the same idea when he said : "They (the capitalists) would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the nation, and therefore without exploitation."<sup>116</sup>

Thus emerged Gandhi's idea of Trusteeship under which the rich and the wealthy are assigned a dignified and legitimate place in his scheme of social reconstruction leading to the emergence of an egalitarian society of affluence. Under such a scheme the capitalists and the propertied classes while retaining their wealth shall renounce their possessiveness and make themselves the vehicles of social change. If they so behave, the seed of violence and the sting of exploitation shall be removed from the society and the society shall gradually assume the nature and form of an egalitarian society. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : "I therefore suggest that my advice that moneyedmen may earn their crores (honestly only of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound . . . It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour."<sup>117</sup> A draft on Trusteeship prepared by Kishorelal Mashruwala and Narahari Parikh that obtained Gandhi's approval goes to say : "Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one."<sup>118</sup>

### THE REALITY OF TRUSTEESHIP

The theory of Trusteeship constitutes one of the cornerstones of Gandhian concept of Socialism. Gandhi subscribed to the view that, if the wealthy and the possessing class hold their surplus wealth on behalf of the society as trustees and use their talent and creativity for earning wealth for the society, an egalitarian society shall be ushered in without violence, bloodshed, dispossession of the propertied class and all the vices

associated with them. Gandhi had so much of confidence in the potency of this technique of social change that he said : "I am confident that it will survive all other theories."<sup>119</sup>

But even admirers of Gandhi have expressed their doubt if Trusteeship is at all a realisable ideal. Jawaharlal Nehru expressing his apprehension has written in his autobiography : "Is it reasonable to believe in the theory of trusteeship to give unchecked power and wealth to an individual and to expect him to use it entirely for the public good ? Are the best of us so perfect as to be trusted in this way ? Even Plato's philosopher-kings could hardly have borne this burden worthily. And is it good for the others to have even these benevolent supermen over them ?"<sup>120</sup> G. D. Birla who fulfilled some of the requirements of a Gandhian trustee, expressing his bitterest experience about the conduct of some moneyed people in respect of payment for social welfare activities wrote to Gandhi : "But I must confess that I was terribly disillusioned in my expectation as regards the finance. I thought people would simply be delighted to pay, at least those who have got money. But inspite of my efforts in Calcutta I have not been able to go above Rs. 50,000. In Delhi, I walked from door to door for two days and I got only Rs. 1500 after great difficulty. One big contractor who is supposed to be a great reformer and a Congressman and who has got sufficient money promised to pay but never paid. I am in daily communication with a number of my friends in Cawnpore, and although they write nice letters they do not pay. Ahmedabad is also hopeless. In Bombay four Marwari firms after having promised subscriptions are withholding payment. I do not think this is because people do not like the work. But every body wants to evade payment if it is at all possible."<sup>121</sup>

Trusteeship idea rests on the premises that the propertied classes should voluntarily renounce their privilege, practise economy in consumption, observe discipline in their private conduct, curtail their indulgence, live a dedicated life for the cause of their neighbour and the society at large, and hold their surplus wealth as the property of the society to be spent for the good of the community. But that presupposes a sense of selflessness and social responsibility on the part of the wealthy and the capitalists which is normally conspicuous by its absence.

As Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao has observed : "The vast majority of us are earth bound and selfish and tend to treat both ability and property as instruments of personal aggrandisement. Under the circumstances any attempt to usher in a socialist society through the mechanism of the principle of trusteeship is not likely to succeed unless it is made a compulsory way of life and such compulsion can not but rest on force and the formidable apparatus of State machinery which rests ultimately on the sanction of force."<sup>122</sup>

Yet Gandhi was not an impractical dreamer who lived in a world of enchantment far from the realities of day-to-day life. He took cognisance of the imperfections from which human beings suffer and selfishness and egoism to which human beings in general are victims. However his profound faith in man, urged him to accept and propagate the concept of Trusteeship as a practical proposition and not as an unrealistic dream of a visionary. Accordingly Gandhi said : "Those who own money now are asked to behave like trustees, holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act upto it, then life on earth, would be governed far more by love than it is at present."<sup>123</sup>

Gandhi was practical enough to realise that all the wealthy people may not be able to grasp the philosophy of trusteeship and practise it in their life. Even all those who grasp the philosophy contained therein may not be able to live as real trustees, living on absolute minimum, and treating their surplus wealth as the property of the nation or the society and treating themselves as trustees thereof. Hence he said : "Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable."<sup>124</sup> But Gandhi realised too that this trusteeship idea is a lofty ideal worth striving for. Even if perfect trusteeship is unattainable and very few people are worthy of practising it in their life, when attempt is made by those of the possessing classes who have the requisite frame of mind to walk forward towards the ideal with a speed realisable by them, much of exploitation and social imbalance shall be eradicated and the world will be a better place to live in. Whatever is attainable by limited application of the principle of Trusteeship, shall far exceed the attainment through any

other method. Hence Gandhi said that inspite of its limitations, "if we strive for it (Trusteeship), we shall be able to go further in realising a state of equality on earth than by any other method."<sup>125</sup>

Gandhi was of the opinion that although all moneyed men may not behave as trustees, there was no dearth of persons ready to experiment the theory of trusteeship in their own life. In his reply to Pierre Ceresole, the Founder President of the International Voluntary Service, Gandhi said : "I know a number of friends, who earn and spend for the poor, and who do not regard themselves, as anything but trustees of their wealth."<sup>126</sup>

Here mention may be made about Jamnalal Bajaj. Under the influence of Gandhi Jamnalal lived the life of a true trustee. After the passing away of his grandfather, he considered that he had no right to enjoy the wealth the former had bequeathed to him, and throughout his life he treated it as a trust to be expended for public good. He evaluated the entire wealth, which he inherited and after adding compound interest on it, upto the date of calculation made over the total amount for charitable purposes.<sup>127</sup> After the Karachi Resolution of the Congress, he reduced his personal expenses to almost the absolute minimum. After he took to *Go Seva* or the care of the cattle, he lived in a simple and crude thatched hut built for himself at a cost of about Rs. 250 that had only a rough cot for sitting and sleeping. As it has been observed : "From the very beginning, he had realised, that riches whether self-earned or inherited can be a source of true happiness only when they are used for the welfare of one's fellow creatures and not for the enjoyment of oneself, and one's family."<sup>128</sup> On Jamnalal's death, Gandhi wrote : "Whenever I wrote of wealthy men, becoming trustees of their wealth for the common good, I had always this merchant prince, principally in mind."<sup>129</sup> He further added : "If his trusteeship did not reach the ideal, the fault was not his. I deliberately restrained him . . . Every house he built for himself became a Dharmasala."<sup>130</sup>

Gandhi on one occasion advised Ghanshyam Das Birla, "Property is often the cause of quarrels, even of murder. A way out of your dilemma is to give up the property altogether. For this you are not prepared at present. But as I have said,

property being the cause of so many quarrels and a temptation for so many misdeeds it is better to give it up and to act as its trustee for such time as would be needed to make one ready to relinquish it altogether, the income derived therefrom being devoted more to the good of others than to the well-being of one's self."<sup>131</sup> This exhortation of Gandhi did not fall on barren ground. G. D. Birla, under the influence of Gandhi not only became the legal trustee of the Sabarmati Ashram, but also acted like a true Trustee in the Gandhian sense of the term. Apart from lakhs of rupees that the Birlas have contributed to Gandhi's Constructive Programme, they have, in the true spirit of Trusteeship, constructed and subsidised many educational institutions, hospitals and temples for public purpose. As Dr. Rajendra Prasad has observed : "It has been one of Gandhiji's teachings that those who are blessed with wealth should regard themselves as Trustees and treat their wealth as trust property for the benefit of others. The large number of institutions which are to be seen in so many parts of the country, either in the shape of educational institutions or religious temples and Dharmasalas or Hospitals, with their apex at Pilani, and Delhi are testimony to the fact that Birlas have imbibed this part of Gandhi's teachings in no small measure."<sup>132</sup> Ghanshyam Das Birla presiding over the Maharashtra Merchants Conference at Sholapur while advocated unity among the merchant class, under the influence of Gandhi's concept of Trusteeship said : "But let me make it clear that the unity which I propose for the businessmen should be unity for service, and not for exploitation . . . If we analyse the functions of the vaishya of the ancient times, we find that he was assigned the duty of production and distribution, not for personal gain, but for common good. All the wealth that he amassed, he held as a trustee, for the nation. Capitalists if they are to fulfil their real function must exist not as exploiters but as servants of society. Let us produce and distribute for the service of the community. Let us live and be prepared, if it comes to that, to sacrifice ourselves, for the common good."<sup>133</sup>

This spirit of renunciation and Trusteeship is not confined only to a handful of persons like Jamnalal Bajaj or Ghanshyam Das Birla. Gandhi was convinced that many rich and wealthy

persons were capable of leading a life transcending their narrow self. As he said : "It is true that generally the rich spend more on themselves than they need. But this can be avoided. I have come across innumerable rich persons who are stingy on themselves."<sup>134</sup>

Thus according to Gandhi, this concept of Trusteeship of the rich is not a wishful thinking and mere romanticism of some inspired, and impractical idealists, unrealisable in real life. With deep conviction and persistent striving, Trusteeship is not only attainable in real life; if honestly pursued it can solve the problems of an inegalitarian society. For Gandhi, it was immaterial how many people were really living the life of trustees or how many were capable of leading such a life in the day-to-day world. As he said : "The question how many can be real trustees is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction."<sup>135</sup>

#### TRUSTEESHIP THROUGH NON-VIOLENT COERCION

For the realisation of the ideal of Trusteeship, Gandhi depended on two premises. For one, the human nature is basically good, and the individuals are not inherently selfish, self-seeking and egoistic in the measure we find them. They are degraded and depraved, devoid of human compassion, fellowship, and fraternity, because of the corrupting influence of the environment. For the other, none, however degraded and depraved, is beyond redemption, and if they are properly and skilfully handled they will respond to moral stimuli. Thus as Gandhi said : "We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response."<sup>136</sup> Depending on these premises Gandhi presumed that although capitalists and moneyed men are normally exploitative and acquisitive in nature, they may favourably respond to moral appeals, renounce their privileges and act as trustees in respect of their superfluous wealth on behalf of the society. Under the influence of such convictions, he spared no effort in persuading the capitalists, industrialists, mill-owners, princes, zamindars, and even rich labourers to renounce their privileges, to accept nothing more than what is required to fulfil their basic needs and act as trustees of

their superfluous wealth on behalf of the society. Hence Gandhi wrote : "I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship inspite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it."<sup>137</sup>

Through the device of trusteeship the capitalists and the privileged classes were given an opportunity by Gandhi to reform themselves. But the privileged classes and the capitalists may not take advantage of such opportunities. As a pragmatist he realised that in spite of all persuasions, there may be many hard nuts that may not be easily cracked. Many moneyed men, capitalists, industrialists, commercial interests and landlords may not easily respond to such a moral appeal. The dust of greed, passion, and selfishness that has accumulated on their finer senses and sensibilities have become so thick that they may require a rude shaking for the liberation of their sense of human compassion and social responsibility. Gandhi of course designed trusteeship so that it will "point a way to the painless extinction of capital and property as a source of inequitous inequality and consequent violence and exploitation in social relations".<sup>138</sup> But if because of the irrationalism and obduracy of the privileged class the society continues to suffer from the excruciating pain of exploitation and violence committed by the privileged class, would Gandhi stand by as a passive on-looker ?

Gandhi was never a fatalist who would advocate a philosophy and leave it to chance for its consummation. If he wanted trusteeship of the rich, sincerely believed in the realisability of the dream and discovered some roadblocks impeding the progress towards the realisation of the objective, he as a grand strategist knew the next step.

#### **(a) A Dose of Warning**

Gandhi as an apostle of non-violence was not prepared to sacrifice his grand strategy i.e., non-violence, that formed the spinal chord of his moral stature and ethical conduct. Yet he was not prepared to put up with irrationalism, selfishness, greed and acquisitiveness of the possessing classes, and the exploitation and violence perpetrated by them, in the name of non-violence. Since accumulation of wealth in face of grinding poverty and heart-breaking misery of millions is itself a type of violence, toleration of such a disparity and permitting such

accumulation to take place, is itself a condonation of violence. Since his non-violence was not that of the weak and the spineless, but of the strong and the chivalrous, who is capable of committing violence but desists from it because of the moral, spiritual and ethical stature of his conduct, such non-violence does not preclude drawing the attention of the privileged people to the consequences of non-compliance with the higher moral order of Trusteeship. Hence when Gandhi found that many propertied people were not voluntarily converting themselves into Trustees by shedding their greed and acquisitiveness, and renouncing their possessiveness, although he was not accustomed to practise any physical or mental coercion and blackmail, did not desist from administering a dose of warning to the possessing class. Accordingly while advising the Zamindars and Talukdars to imbibe the spirit of the Japanese nobles, read the sign of the time, revise their notions, and hold their wealth as trustees for the good of the people and the ryots, he warned them : "There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of the superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force, that a powerful government can bring into play can avert."<sup>139</sup>

Gandhi desired a non-violent type of Swaraj but he considered economic equality, or abolition of eternal conflict between the rich and the poor and the privileged and the under-privileged as the *sine qua non* of such non-violent Swaraj. He was firmly dedicated to the application of the non-violent technique of persuasion and conversion and non-violent non-cooperation for the attainment of the objective. But writing in the Constructive Programme a few years before Independence, Gandhi said : "A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good."<sup>140</sup>

Writing in the *Harijan*, Gandhi urged upon the propertied class to ponder over the legality and morality of their possession and their duty towards the society. He pointed out to them that their wealth was the cause of their worries and anxiety,

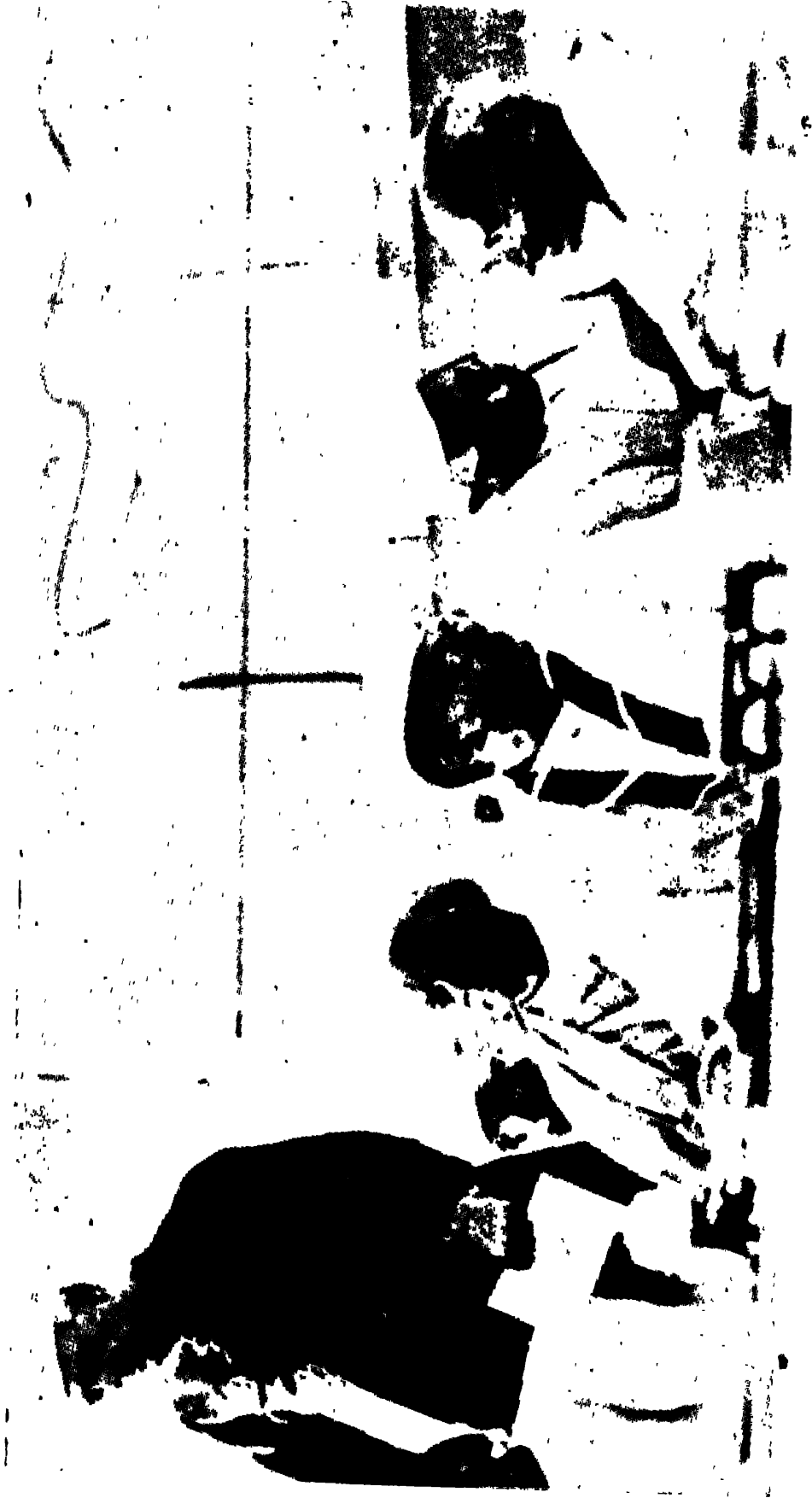


unhappiness and insecurity. "They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them." While pleading that they should renounce their possessiveness, he warned them : "If the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them. I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms, or of non-violence."<sup>141</sup> Subsequently he further warned the wealthy sections of the society : "As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class-war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth."<sup>142</sup>

#### **(b) Non-Violent Non-Cooperation**

But Gandhi was not prepared to condone violent methods for the sake of realisation of his ideal of Trusteeship. Non-violence is too precious an ideal to be sacrificed by Gandhi. Besides, the concept of Trusteeship of the rich was devised as an alternative to the violent overthrow of privileges so that violent method can not take precedence over the real objective of socialism through Trusteeship. Yet if the privileged sections of the society inspite of all manner of persuasion and moral pressure fail to live up to the ideal of trusteeship, the technique of social compulsion short of violence or coercion, can be employed against them. As it has been observed : "Gandhi made a fine distinction between coercive measure and compulsion."<sup>143</sup> Even if violence or physical coercion did not find favour with Gandhi as a technique to be used against the wealthy sections of the society, so as to make them come round, see reason and act as trustees, measures short of violence, were not wanting in Gandhi's armoury of non-violence.

Satyagraha or non-violent non-cooperation was the potent Gandhian technique of non-violent struggle. Gandhi recommended that the same technique may be used against the propertied classes so that they may be compelled to convert themselves into trustees. Gandhi believed that production under any system, whether feudalism or capitalism, is possible because of labour or the co-operation of labour with the existing system and method of production. Even accumulation



**Gandhi with Jawaharlal, the Socialist, Sardar, the Peasant leader, and  
Subhash, the Progressive.**



**Gandhi on Peace Mission in riot ravaged Bengal in 1947.**



**Gandhi in the Tolstoy farm, his second experiment in  
establishing Socialist Community.**



**At home with the Proletariat.**  
(Gandhi with Textile workers at Lancashire)

of wealth by the capitalists or moneyed-men becomes impossible without the cooperation of the labourers who are the real producers. As Gandhi wrote : "The rich can not accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society."<sup>144</sup> As he further said : "All exploitation is based on co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited."<sup>145</sup> Hence if the real producers – the labourers and peasants—resort to non-cooperation, production shall evaporate, accumulation of wealth will fizzle out and the spring of prosperity of the wealthy sections of the society will dry up. If this non-violent non-cooperation is resorted to, the capitalists will realise the strength of the labourers and their own weakness and may convert themselves into trustees. Accordingly Gandhi said : "If, however, inspite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor, in the true sense of the term, and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done ? In trying to find the solution to this riddle, I have lighted on, non-violent, non-cooperation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means."<sup>146</sup> Speaking about the conversion of the recalcitrant landlords into trustees, Gandhi also suggested adoption of the same formula of non-violent non-cooperation. He said : "The moment the cultivators of the soil realise their power, the Zamindari evil will be sterilised. What can the poor Zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land, unless they are paid enough to feed, and clothe and educate, themselves, and their children, in a decent manner ? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine they will become an irresistible power."<sup>147</sup>

Thus although Gandhi renounced violence as a technique of social revolution, he freely recommended use of non-violent non-cooperation against the propertied class, so that its members may be compelled to convert themselves into trustees. Not only Gandhi recommended employment of such technique of non-violent coercion or civilised compulsion; he even took leadership on the occasion of the Ahmedabad Textile Labourers' Strike or non-violent non-cooperation against the millowners.

But non-violent non-cooperation as advocated by Gandhi, although a potent instrument that can compel the wealthy

sections of the society to act as trustees, is dependent on the premise that the labour or the working class, must become conscious of its strength and should be ready to assert its right. Besides, the strength of the labour comes from its unity and collective endeavour. If all the labourers without exception lower down their tools, the entire economy may be paralysed and the wealthy sections of the society—the industrialists, businessmen, manufacturers and landlords—shall be made to realise the real strength of the labour. Hence Gandhi said : “In my humble opinion labour can always vindicate itself if labour is sufficiently united and self-sacrificing.”<sup>148</sup> But as is very often found in real life, labour is not united and when some labourers non-cooperate with the employers, others are ready to take their place. Under these circumstances, requisite amount of pressure can not be exerted on the propertied classes to compel them to act as trustees. Hence although pressure exercised by the labourers can compel the wealthy sections to yield and act as trustees, yet due to division in the rank of the labour the thunder in the move is often lost and trusteeship does not become a practical proposition.

### STATUTORY TRUSTEESHIP

Gandhi the practical idealist having realised, the limitations of the concept of voluntary assumption of trusteeship by the rich and the need for the adoption of the strategy of pressure to be exercised by the labourers, came round to acknowledge the significance of statutory measures or legislation for giving effect to his idea of Trusteeship. Hence the Practical Trusteeship Formula prepared by Kishorelal Mashruwala and Narahari Parikh, that obtained Gandhi's approval reads, “It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.”<sup>149</sup>

This plea for statutory measure for effecting Trusteeship and legislative regulation of ownership and use of wealth may be interpreted as Gandhi's lack of faith in the potency of non-violent method and the technique of persuasion and conversion and his consequent reliance on the power of the state and its legislative authority. In reply to Pyarelal, who wanted to know whether the theory of Trusteeship was not invented by him

because of his realisation of the ineffectiveness of the non-violent method, Gandhi said in 1942 : "I refuse to admit that non-violence knows any limit to the sacrifice that it can demand or command. The doctrine of trusteeship stands on its own merits."<sup>150</sup>

Besides, although he realised the need for providing a statutory basis or a legal sanction to the idea of trusteeship, the statute that Gandhi had in mind is not one which is imposed from above by the all-pervading state that represents violence in its concentrated and organised form. It shall not be planned out and implemented by a coterie or clique of the ruling party or the bureaucracy under whose spell comes the entire nation and the entire economy.

Gandhi's ideal picture of social and political organisation, comprehends a system of self-sufficient and self-governing village republics, democratically organised, with Gram Panchayat as the basic unit of government erected on the basis of consent of the people. The statute or the legislation regulating the wealth of the propertied class shall therefore emanate from such Gram Panchayats after a free and full discussion and proper appreciation of the principles by people in general. Hence Gandhi has said : "Such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implication of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it the people themselves beginning with Gram Panchayats will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below, is easy to swallow. Coming from above it is liable to prove a dead weight "<sup>151</sup>

The basis of the trusteeship statute therefore is not force or violence, power and authority but consent of the people in general. The statute shall no doubt have an element of compulsion in it. As Gandhi admitted : "I believe in legislation. There is an element of coercion in it." But it is a type of compulsion that takes into account the considered opinion of all members of the society and is thus based on the common consent of the people. The basis of the statute is democratic through and through since it shall be planned and formulated on the basis of the understanding and consent of the people. Any statute must be preceded by a dispassionate analysis of the problems by all concerned and the arousing of the enlightened



self-interest of all. Even if the statute has an element of compulsion behind it, the compulsion that is resorted to is the compulsion effected by the democratic process, or the democratic majority to convert the recalcitrant few, who are unable to see reason and renounce privileges, even inspite of the best efforts of many. A democratically constituted society, felt Gandhi, can coerce and compel the unenlightened souls, to be free, to see reason, and liberate their souls from greed and acquisitiveness. Speaking about the power and the source of compulsion that can be used against the propertied class, Gandhi said : "By power I mean voting power for the people—so broad-based that the will of the majority can be given effect to."<sup>152</sup>

Even if statutes or legislations found favour with Gandhi as techniques of last resort to give effect to the idea of Trusteeship, Gandhi did not overlook the potency of the technique of persuasion and conversion to aid, and effectualise the statutory enactments; rather he felt that persuasion and conversion should precede statutory enactments so that it will make the propertied classes mentally prepared to accept the statutory enactments intended to give effect to Trusteeship system. As Gandhi said : "Conversion must precede legislation. Legislation in the absence of conversion remains a dead letter."<sup>153</sup> But the technique of conversion that he suggests is not by way of prayer and petitions, but by exhibition of the potency of democratic forces or public opinion. As Gandhi said : "You see if the owning class does not accept the trusteeship basis voluntarily, its conversion must come under the pressure of public opinion."<sup>154</sup>

Apart from advocating introduction of Trusteeship through statutes framed by the Gram Panchayats, Gandhi also felt that the State may be depended upon for the introduction of trusteeship. Educating the public in the principles of trusteeship so that it provides a basis to the statutory trusteeship system, or educating the workers and peasants to be conscious of their rights and dignity so that necessary social condition conducive to trusteeship is created, is a time consuming process. But unless the state intervenes in time some national assets may be spoiled by unimaginative and useless owners of those property. Although Gandhi was afraid of the power of the

state and the violence perpetrated by it, for the sake of the long term interest of the nation he was prepared to allow state intervention to force Trusteeship upon the possessing and the privileged class. Hence he said : "I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State."<sup>155</sup>

But while conceding the introduction of trusteeship through State intervention Gandhi still adhered to his apprehension that the State may employ too much of violence against the propertied class during the process of effecting such changeover. Hence he suggested "minimum exercise of violence by the State".<sup>156</sup>

### COMMISSION OF THE TRUSTEES

The Gandhian theory of Trusteeship presupposes that the moneyed men shall retain possession of their entire wealth but spend only a fraction of it for satisfying their reasonable and legitimate needs whereas the rest of it shall be held on behalf of the society which they shall not touch or squander away for self-indulgence or a life addicted to luxury. It also presupposes that the trustees must be allowed to satisfy their legitimate wants because, their services are essential for the society, and the society will be poorer but for their services.

But what are the legitimate needs of the trustee and if it is a question of voluntary trusteeship how much of his wealth the trustee shall spend for himself ? Gandhi who devised the concept of Trusteeship to serve his ideal of egalitarian society or socialism, was ready to concede to all only their absolute need and therefore he accepted the maxim "To each according to his need." The Trustees were expected to fall in line and have satisfaction of their basic needs. But Gandhi was not prepared to concede to the claim of the trustee for any phenomenal figure on the ground that it constitutes his basic minimum or absolute need. He would consider that "a travesty of my argument". The trustee's commission must be directly related to the level of income and the standard of living prevailing in the country.

As already referred to earlier, basic minimum, or one's

essential needs according to Gandhi meant "a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief". Hence the trustee according to Gandhian ideal may spend out of his wealth, the requisite amount that is needed to fulfil such basic needs. Thus in consonance with the higher ideal of egalitarian society the trustee shall "have the where-withal to supply all his natural needs and no more". As Gandhi said: "According to the doctrine, they (Trustees) may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours." Thus although they possess their entire wealth, out of the same they must not spend for themselves, legitimately speaking, anything more than their neighbours. The commission of the trustee therefore boils down to means or wealth adequate to meet his essential needs and not a coin more than one's neighbours.

But when the question of Statutory Trusteeship arises, along with it arises fixation of commission by the Gram Panchayats or the state that formulates the statute. How much of commission can be paid to the trustee, and what can be considered legitimate? As Gandhi conceded: "The state would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to the society."<sup>157</sup> Here the emphasis is on the "service rendered and its value to the society". Gandhi as a practical idealist realised that different trustees can have different abilities and by their differential ability, different trustees may contribute differently to the society. If it is a question of voluntary trusteeship the trustee shall act with his full vigour and efficiency setting in full play his knack and tact for earning crores for the society, without caring for his commission and without being deterred by the higher rate of commission of a neighbouring trustee who is less efficient and enterprising than himself. But when it is a question of Statutory Trusteeship, unless the more efficient trustees, holding considerably vast wealth, are paid higher rate of commission than the less enterprising trustees who hold comparatively smaller fortune, the incentive to honestly hold and promote the wealth of the society may suffer a set back. Hence to properly domesticate the goose that lays golden eggs, and make it lay more golden eggs, the goose must be properly and sufficiently fed in order to keep its vigour and efficiency intact.

Therefore, the commission of the trustees must be proportionate to and directly related to their services and sacrifices for the society. Thus Gandhi would tolerate payment of different amounts of commission to different trustees but in no case the commission should be such that it is inadequate to fulfil their basic needs.

Even if difference in the quantum of commission of different trustees depending on their differential contribution to the society is tolerated by Gandhi, the gap between the minimum and the maximum should not be too wide. The difference should be reasonable and at the same time equitable. Due attention should be paid to the reasonable differential needs of different trustees instead of the assumed difference in their respective needs. That apart, the difference in the commission may be a feature of the transitional stage of trusteeship which can be varied from time to time and ultimately wiped out in the long run. The Practical Trusteeship Formula that obtained Gandhi's approval reads : "Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so, a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum income should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the differences."<sup>158</sup>

Gandhi gave a serious thought to the relation that the commission shall bear to the wealth that is held as trust on behalf of the society. He was prepared to concede a maximum of 25% of the entire wealth held in trust, as commission but nothing beyond the same. In reply to Pierre Ceresole, Gandhi said : "Let the rich man take 5 percent, or 10 percent, or 15 percent. But not 85 percent. Ah ! I was thinking of going up to 25 percent. But not even an exploiter must think of taking 85 percent."<sup>159</sup>

Permitting the propertied class to enjoy 25% of their wealth as commission for trusteeship is no doubt a very big concession, considered from the standpoint of the abysmal poverty of the country. This may lead to the continuation of disparity in the society although the disparity is considerably reduced. But Gandhi was prepared to pay the price for the sake of initiating a non-violent revolution. As Gandhi said : "If he says, 'I am

prepared to keep for myself 25 percent and to give 75 percent to charities', I close with the offer for I know that 75 percent voluntarily given is better than 100 percent surrendered at the point of bayonet and by thus being satisfied with 75 percent, I render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesar's."<sup>160</sup>

Gandhi did not overlook the fact that such a high rate of commission to the trustees will be a very big concession but considered from the stand-point of the long term gain and the atmosphere of peace and goodwill that it will generate the sacrifice he felt is worth-while. Besides, as Gandhi's scheme comprehends gradual reduction of the gap between the maximum and the minimum income, this high rate of commission may be eliminated in the long run.

At times Gandhi was even prepared to concede to the Trustees 50% of their wealth in form of commission but his plan was one of progressive reduction of the percentage of commission, the poorer trustee getting a higher rate while the richer one getting a comparatively lower percentage of his wealth in form of commission. As Gandhi said : "I do not fix a figure for this 'Commission' but I ask them only to demand what they consider they are entitled to. For example, I shall ask the person who has a hundred rupees to keep fifty rupees and give the other fifty to the workers; but in the case of a person who has ten million rupees I shall ask him to retain, say one percent. So you see that my 'Commission' would not be a fixed figure because that would result in grave injustice."<sup>161</sup>

### SUCCESSOR OF THE TRUSTEES

Trusteeship as Gandhi explicitly expressed "is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage". It is not a transitory measure, which like the Marxian state, shall wither away in due course. Gandhi like Marx might have thought of the superfluity of the state which may vanish in the long-run but 'Trusteeship as a technique of social revolution leading to the emergence of an egalitarian society was considered by him as a permanent feature which need not be got rid of. As Gandhi observed : "No other theory is compatible with non-violence."<sup>162</sup> Hence Gandhi's concept of socialism based on non-violence, not only presupposes the existence of individual trustees who shall, after renouncing their

possessiveness, hold their wealth as trustees on behalf of the society, but a system of Trusteeship that is self-perpetuating. Although men are mortal and individual trustees are no exception to it, yet Trusteeship system is a continuous process, ever operative but never a thing of the past. Like Tennyson's *Brook* inspite of change in the personnel, trusteeship according to Gandhi has eternal value and perennial significance.

But how shall Trusteeship be made a continuous process ? It is quite conceivable that all the wealthy people at a particular time of history may be made statutory trustees as a result of statutory enactments, by the Gram Panchayats or the State but as the trustees like all human beings are mortal, who shall take the place of the deceased trustees ? How the successors shall be chosen, and what shall be their essential qualifications ? These are quite pertinent questions that may arise in the minds of the advocates as well as the critics of Trusteeship. Gandhi, although not a system-builder in the accepted sense of the term, was aware of the problem; he gave serious thought to it and devised his characteristic solution.

Who can be the right type of successor of a trustee ? A trustee, as Gandhi understood it, may earn crores by legitimate means but he must have the feeling that all his income, legitimately earned, by the sweat of his brow, or by employment of his intellect, is not meant to be spent by him for himself. He shall have the right to fulfil his "legitimate need" or to have an honourable livelihood and no more. Besides the honourable livelihood should be directly related to the living standard of millions of his countrymen and shall in no way be superior to it. The rest of his income shall be held by him on behalf of the society and spent for its welfare. Thus the trustee's real objective is protection and promotion of the interest of the society. He is the custodian of the nation's interest. He lives and works for the society, sacrificing his self-interest and sublimating his self. Although he possesses vast wealth and enormous fortune, he must have renounced possessiveness, greed and acquisitiveness.

Hence in order to be a successor of a trustee one must have the requisite spirit of a trustee. A trustee's children need not necessarily be his successors as trustees. Children of a trustee, may not necessarily be so enlightened as to renounce their

greed and possessiveness and live a life, socially dedicated and ethically oriented to hold the interest of the community superior to self-interest. Succession to Trusteeship therefore does not go strictly by the principle of family inheritance. As Gandhi said about the right of the children of the trustees to inherit trusteeship, "Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it."<sup>163</sup> If the children of the trustees shall be found self-seeking, greedy and acquisitive, devoid of a sense of social responsibility and are either unwilling or incapable of renouncing possessiveness, they would forfeit their claim to succession as trustees.

As Gandhian theory of Trusteeship goes, "It does not recognise, any right of private property, except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare."<sup>164</sup> Therefore the privilege of Trusteeship is not a private right but a public responsibility which by the very nature of things is not transferable or inheritable. The trustee performs a social responsibility, and if he has any legatee or beneficiary, it is the society which can rightly claim, the right to inherit the property. Hence Gandhi very appropriately said: "A trustee has no heir, but the public."<sup>165</sup> The interests of the public or the society and their protection and promotion are therefore the primary considerations in the matter of succession to Trusteeship. Gandhi wrote to Kamalnayan Bajaj, Jamnalal Bajaj's son: "It is not an easy thing to be Jamnalal's heir. You are his heir as a son, whereas I am his heir as his adopted father."<sup>166</sup> A true heir and successor of a trustee shall therefore, hold in the highest esteem the interest of the society and must earn his right to trusteeship by dint of his conduct and character, by shedding his acquisitiveness and possessiveness.

In respect of appointment of the successor, Gandhi had also a clear-cut idea. He gave the right of nomination to the original trustee. Trustees who have themselves lived a dedicated life, have renounced their privileges for the sake of the society, and have lived on the absolute minimum, keeping in view the general living standard of the community can be relied on for making a right selection of their successors. Having themselves lived a life of dedication they may be the proper persons to select right type of persons to succeed them. But nomination must obtain final sanction of the community.

Hence Gandhi wrote : "As to the successor, the trustee in office, would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction."<sup>167</sup>

When Gandhi wanted to fetter the original trustee's choice making it subject to "legal sanction" he acted as a pragmatist who felt that the trustees however above the averagemen and however self-sacrificing they themselves may be, may have some weakness for their own children, kith and kin. If the trustees are given unrestrained power to choose their successor they may choose their own people to succeed them as trustees. This may be particularly true in case of statutory trustees who have not voluntarily renounced their possessions or possessiveness, but have been forced to act as such under the pressure of the statute enacted either by the Village Panchayat or the State. Hence Gandhi suggested that the nomination made by the original trustees need be confirmed by the State. As he said : "Choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice, must be finalised by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual."<sup>168</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Gandhian concept of Trusteeship is one of the most important and original contributions to the realm of socialist thought. It provides the organisational pattern that circumvents the problems of a centralised and bureaucratised socialist state born of antagonism, hatred, violence and civil war. It is an institutional innovation strictly in consonance with the Gandhian emphasis on non-violence. It speaks profusely that Gandhi was not a mere dreamer, or an impractical idealist, who indulged in some pious wishes but had no idea as to the machinery for the realisation of the dream. It stands out as a testimony to Gandhi's ability as a socialist strategist far better than many of his predecessors in this field.

Socialist thinkers and socialist strategists before him obsessed with the spectacle of exploitation and inequality prevailing in the society prescribed different types of remedies. Socialists like Robert Owen, Ruskin and Tolstoy harped on the purification of personal conduct of the privileged class and renunciation



of privilege and possession by them. They themselves practised non-possession with the expectation that their personal conduct shall have impact on the outside world and the society taking cue from it, may stand reformed and assume egalitarian character. On the other extreme of the spectrum stand socialist strategists like Marx and Engels who reposed their faith in elaborately planned and zealously executed, organised action of the social group that is exploited, with the help of violence, bloodshed and accentuation of conflict and civil war. The purity of conduct of the impassioned socialists of the Utopian school, and their personal sacrifices, could not exert sufficient impact on the society and could not stimulate emergence of an egalitarian system out of these individual experiments in philanthropy and purification of personal conduct. The Marxian strategy of fomentation of class-hatred and violent civil war has not succeeded in generating a healthy social order grounded on the principles of equality, freedom, fraternity and fellowship. The violent technique of social change, and the revolution conceived in terms of class-hatred and class-antagonism have succeeded in perpetrating hatred, antagonism and violence, out of which there is little prospect of emergence of an egalitarian society. Centralisation of direction and control of individual as well as social conduct envisages slavery of the individual to a soul-less state.

Gandhian concept of Trusteeship provides a solution to both the extremes of isolated individual initiative and enterprise to reform the society through its demonstration effect on the one hand and too much of centralism and statism on the other that survive by perpetrating a new type of slavery. Trusteeship is an attempt to build up a system out of purification of personal conduct of the possessing class. But it does not envisage solitary individual effort at self-purification and renunciation by a few enlightened wealthy men. It encompasses on the other hand a system of trusteeship and a whole class of trustees comprising all the rich men in the society who have no other legitimate right to possess their wealth than to utilise their superfluous wealth for the welfare of the community. Under the Gandhian scheme, the rich men as a class, whether voluntarily or through the application of the system of Statutory Trusteeship, shall act as trustees. Even pressure and

civilised compulsion are not ruled out by Gandhi to introduce the scheme of Trusteeship.

But the Trusteeship approach is primarily voluntary rather than compulsive. It relies too much on the purity of personal conduct of the possessing class, their renunciation of greed, acquisitiveness, and love of possession, and sublimation of their self for the sake of social good. It rests on the premise that human beings are capable of looking beyond self and renounce their privileges for the sake of common good and however depraved some of them may be, they may be harnessed to the cause of social good by careful handling. Only under exceptional circumstances, Trusteeship is established with the help of statutory compulsion. It holds at a discount violence as a technique of social change and thus it is an anti-thesis to the concept of violent conflict as an instrument of creating a new class-less social order.

The Trusteeship system of Gandhi also provides a rational alternative to too much of centralisation, bureaucratisation and dehumanisation that are associated with the Marxian type of state socialism. The Marxian type of state socialism while trying to neutralise the metamorphosis of man under a soul-less system of capitalism, deprives the individual of his separate and independent existence as a social unit. The Gandhian alternative of voluntary socialism through Trusteeship overcomes such deficiency. As V. K. R. V. Rao has observed : "Trusteeship by the individual rather than ownership by the state . . . makes for a greater measure of personal freedom, and individual initiative than is associated with a socialist state of the Marxist or statist variety with its bureaucratic proliferation and curbs on individual initiative."<sup>169</sup>

To sum up the Gandhian concept of Trusteeship is an innovation that aims at securing an egalitarian society by bypassing the problems associated with a system ushered in with the help of violence and bloodshed, leading to an all enveloping state that compromises the dignity of the individual. As C. Rajagopalachari observed : "The doctrine of Trusteeship adumbrated by Gandhi namely that the rich people should hold their superfluous wealth as trustees for the poor and that this way of life should be inculcated by example as well as precept without compulsion or cruelty is the only true alternative to

Marxism.”<sup>170</sup>

Thus trusteeship spirit, truly imbibed and rightly implemented, would provide a new guideline and a new horizon to the world afflicted by inequality on the one hand and totalitarianism on the other and thus shall be in the language of Gandhi, India's unique message to the world.

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## CHAPTER 8

# GANDHIAN SOCIALISM, SOCIAL OWNERSHIP AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Socialists of all hues, inspite of their differences in respect of their approach to socialism and their technique for the attainment of the same, are unanimous in respect of imposition of restraints on the laissez-faire economy to establish the socialist system.

It is of course universally acknowledged by all socialists that the spirit of acquisitiveness, greed, profiteering and exploitation, that animate the pre-socialist, laissez-faire, bourgeois, or capitalist economy, militates against the socialist values like equality, fraternity and fellowship. There is no disputing the fact that such individualistic and anti-social spirit drives a wedge in the society, divides it into haves and the have-nots, privileged and paupers, and produces luxurious and ostentatious living of a few amidst poverty, shortages, and sufferings of millions. But such a spirit by itself would cut but little ice without the power of ownership and control of the capitalists or the bourgeoisie over the economy. Since the capitalists or the bourgeoisie enjoy unbridled power of ownership and control over the economy being guided by their acquisitive and exploitative spirit they use and abuse this power to fatten their own purse at the expense of the community.

Thus this acquisitiveness and greed when aided and abetted by concentration of economic power in the hands of the monopolists and oligopolists bleed the society white. Those who wield the reins of economic power take all decisions in



regard to the nature, quantity, and quality of production, wage, pricing policy of the product, margin of profit, nature of the market, and even influence with the help of the machinery of publicity and propaganda at their command, the consumers' behaviour and preferences and thereby perpetuate the system of exploitative economy. This concentration of ownership of means of production, distribution and exchange, and their monopolisation by a few, perpetrate division of society into haves and the have-nots, create artificial distinction between privilege and poverty and perpetuate the co-existence of unparalleled prosperity of a parasitical few and abysmal poverty, deprivation and destitution of millions. The socialist strategists in general have therefore made the transfer of ownership and control of the economy from private hands, the main plank of their economic policy. Hence as John Strachey has observed : "No decisive advance to socialism can be made without breaking the class monopoly in the ownership of the means of production, by changing society's relations of production."<sup>1</sup>

If the monopolistic control over the economy by the bourgeoisie, the capitalists or the big business is to be liquidated, the natural alternative is its transfer to public ownership and control. For the sake of socialist transformation, the ownership and control of the economy therefore need be transferred to the society or the community. If capitalistic ownership and control facilitate promotion of the interests of private enterprise and of the bourgeoisie, for the overall prosperity of the society that embraces the welfare of all, the economy must be the property of all, owned and controlled by the community as a whole, whether such ownership and control is branded as "Public Ownership", "Social Ownership" or "Common Ownership". As the Socialist Union has observed : "To promote the common good, economic power had to be wrested from the capitalists and submitted to the visible controls of society . . . . The simplest way of doing this, so it seemed was to replace the private ownership of all property which represented power by some form of common ownership."<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Von Mises, although not an impassioned socialist has gone to the extent of writing : "The essence of socialism is this : All the means of production are in the exclusive control of the organised community. This and this alone is socialism. All other

definitions are misleading.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus the socialist prophets and writers on socialism are in complete agreement on the issue that for the sake of socialist transformation of the society, ownership and control of economic power must pass into the society. The Society as the guardian, protector, promoter and defender of the hopes and aspirations, interests and welfare, of the people in general, should also be the custodian of the economy. If the society becomes the guardian and the custodian of the economy and regulates and controls production, distribution and exchange, exploitation will be overcome and general welfare will be promoted. Hence Bertrand Russell has observed : “I think we shall come nearest to the essence of socialism, by defining it as the advocacy of communal ownership of land and capital.”<sup>4</sup>

So the first step towards socialist transformation is transfer of ownership and control of the economy from private hands to the society or the community, or substitution of private ownership by “Public Ownership”, “Social Ownership” or “Common Ownership”. To use the Shawvian terminology if ‘Private property’ is the very definition of ‘Unsocialism’<sup>5</sup>, public ownership or social ownership is the very cornerstone of socialism.

## SOCIALISM AND STATE OWNERSHIP

If social ownership or communal ownership is the cornerstone of socialism, socialist thinkers and strategists are not unanimous in respect of the form that social ownership or communal ownership will assume. Some identify social ownership with state ownership whereas others suspect state ownership as a type of distortion and perversion of social ownership. They want to have in its place municipal, co-operative, trade union, or guild ownership. But in countries that are implementing socialist policy and are on the firm track of socialist transformation, social ownership other than state ownership is not treated as a substitute but only as a supplementary method of state ownership. Hence state ownership as a technique of social ownership is considered as of supreme significance in considering the concept of socialism.

### (a) **Scientific Socialism and State Ownership**

Karl Marx and Frederic Engels, the prophets of Scientific

Socialism, started with the assumption that the state is an apparatus of class coercion meant for use by the privileged class to exploit the proletariat and keep them in a state of perpetual bondage. The state, according to them, is therefore imbued with a class character and violence, terror and exploitation from its life blood. As Engels writes : "It (the state) is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. Thus the state of antiquity was above all the state of the slave owners for the purpose of holding down the slaves as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant and serfs and bondsmen and the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by capital."<sup>6</sup>

Marx and Engels while visualising the emergence of a classless society conceived that in the ultimate analysis, the state that is an instrument of class domination and exploitation, will be found redundant in a society devoid of class distinction. As the Communist Manifesto says : "When in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character."<sup>7</sup> But ironically enough they also made the state—though the Proletarian State—an invaluable instrument for socialist transformation. The proletariat after the seizure of power as a consequence of the proletarian revolution, constitutes itself the state—the power, to restructure the society and the economic system. The entire economic power of the society shall be concentrated in the hands of the proletariat organised as the state. As the Communist Manifesto says : "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total productive forces, as rapidly as possible."<sup>8</sup>

Thus the proletariat organised as the state become the sole owner, regulator and manager of the economic activities of the society after proletarian seizure of political power. The means of production, distribution and exchange are centrally owned

by the state and thus the state which was considered by the co-architects of Scientific Socialism as an engine of class-oppression becomes the instrument of social ownership for ultimately leading to a class-less society. As Engels writes : "This state may have to undergo considerable changes before it can fulfil its new functions. But to destroy it in one moment would mean to destroy the only organisation with which the victorious proletariat would exercise the power, which it has just conquered to subdue its capitalist enemies, and to carry through that economic revolution of society without which, the victory would of necessity end in a new defeat."<sup>9</sup> Thus for the sake of economic revolution and for generating an egalitarian society, the state according to Marx and Engels shall be continued as a social institution. The social ownership as conceived by them that substitutes bourgeois ownership of the pre-revolutionary stage is merely state ownership. The state representing the community interest, symbolising the long-term hopes and aspirations of the proletariat, becomes the owner, director, controller and co-ordinator of all economic activities of the society.

Though Lenin in line with the Marxian tradition, advocated that the state is an organ of class rule "a special organisation of force" and "an organisation of violence" which must be given a burial lock, stock and barrel, he assigned a dignified place to the state as an instrument of socialist transformation. Lenin like Engels felt that the bourgeois state, that is used as a "special repressive force" against the proletariat or the working class, shall no doubt be abolished, liquidated and crushed out of existence as a result of the proletarian revolution. but during the transitional period, or during the period intervening between transition from capitalism to socialism, the state shall continue as an apparatus of socialist transformation. Lenin of course advocated that the state that functions after the proletarian revolution is not the same old state of the bourgeoisie. The state that continues during this stage is erected on a new basis, i.e. "The suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat."<sup>10</sup> It is the end of "State as state". But the Proletarian State or the Dictatorship of the Proletariat wields enormous economic power as the custodian of the socialist economy and all public property. Speaking about its primary and preliminary

role after the proletarian revolution, Lenin wrote : "This is precisely the 'act' of taking possession of the means of production in the name of society."<sup>11</sup>

The "transitional state" by the very nature of things is no doubt a temporary phase, a link between the post-revolutionary society and the communist society of the future. It shall no doubt wither away in the long run, but during the transitional period, the state is considered inevitable, as apart from acting as "the centralised organisation of force, the organisation of violence" to "crush the resistance of the exploiters", it is also utilised for "organising all the toiling and the exploited masses for the new economic order", and for leading "the enormous masses of the population—the peasantry, the petty-bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians—in the work of organising socialist economy."<sup>12</sup>

Thus the "transitional state" of Lenin shall be in over-all charge of the socialist economy. It shall act as the custodian of public property, seized or confiscated from the bourgeoisie at the time of the proletarian revolution and the promoter, planner, and executor of all the means of production, distribution and exchange. Thus the proletarian ownership of property of Lenin is indistinguishable from state ownership although the Proletarian State is different from the ordinary state or the bourgeois state. As Lenin said : "There still remains the need for a state, which, while safeguarding the public ownership of the means of production, would safeguard equality in labour and equality in the distribution of products."<sup>13</sup>

Stalin not only maintained the dignified position of the state as an instrument of socialist transformation; he carried it still further. Marx and Engels had visualised gradual withering away of the state. Even Lenin while arguing that the bourgeois state is abolished and crushed after the proletarian revolution and is not allowed to wither away, and the principle of withering away of the state is applicable only to the proletarian or the post-revolutionary or the transitional state, conceded that although the state shall play the predominant role during the transitional period in the matter of socialist transformation by acting as the custodian-in-chief of public property, it shall pave the way for its own withering away. But in the context of Stalin's idea of "socialism in one country" the state not only

became a far more dominant figure—an institution of excellence that became the chief instrument of socialist transformation—the state did not give any impression of withering away. This idea of “socialism in one country” presupposed capitalist encirclement of the socialist country and took into cognizance the continuous threat that the capitalist countries pose to the socialist state. He felt that the small islet of socialism in the vast sea of capitalism and reaction, would not be safe and for the sake of progressive realisation of socialism and final attainment of communism, greater reliance must be put on the state and multiplication of its power. As early as 1930 Stalin in his report to the 16th Party Congress said: “We are for the withering away of the state. And yet we also believe in the proletarian dictatorship, which represents the strongest and mightiest form of state power that has existed up to now. To keep on developing state power in order to prepare the conditions for the withering away of the state power,—that is the Marxist formula.”<sup>14</sup>

Stalin's subsequent thought moved in the line of making the state “strongest and mightiest” but never foresaw the withering away of the state. Even when the exploiting classes had been crushed and there was no longer the bourgeoisie, the state was not only maintained but also strengthened. So long as the socialist state is surrounded by hostile states and hostile systems, the state shall not only continue, it shall be made stronger day by day. Even if the “Socialist State” passed from the socialist to the communist stage of economic and social development the state shall be maintained and strengthened until “capitalist encirclement is liquidated and the danger of foreign military attack has disappeared”. As Herbert Marcuse has very appropriately observed: “Emphasis was placed on the strengthening of the state power prior to and during the transition to Communism.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus building of socialism in one country and making it a viable system in the context of capitalist encirclement, made the state—may be the proletarian state of Stalin—the final arbiter of the nation's economic destiny, the owner, controller, regulator and co-ordinator of all economic activities and all the public properties and national assets. So it has been observed: “The state is the ‘collective subject’ of the national

economy which organises the whole of society and this organisation has become the objectified representative of society over and above the individuals, since societal production is systematically directed by the state and since the basic decisions are imposed upon the society by the state, progress itself, that is to say the use of the growing productivity for the needs and aspirations of the individuals must pass through the agencies of the state.”<sup>16</sup> The state is therefore the centre round which all socialist construction revolves. Public ownership and control of economy according to Stalin, therefore, must assume the form of state ownership and control. So Herbert Marcuse has very aptly observed : “The State according to Soviet Marxism, becomes the Archimedean point, from which the world is moved into socialism, the ‘basic instrument’ for the establishment of socialism and communism.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus the state according to Marx and the Marxists or the Scientific Socialists occupies the centre of the stage in the process of socialist transformation. Although they started with condemnation of the state, as an instrument of violence, force and oppression, they ultimately wanted to utilise the state machine, after the proletarian revolution and proletarian seizure of political power, for the ushering in of an era of socialist prosperity and dissemination of socialist values. The state machine, they felt, can be garnered to the objective of socialist and even communist reconstruction in the guise of Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Under the control and direction of the proletariat, the state, an instrument of enslavement and coercion has been supposed to act as an instrument of liberation. Thus state ownership has been treated by them almost as a synonym of social ownership that indicates the way to egalitarian reconstruction of the society.

Besides, with the exception of the Guild Socialists, the Syndicalists and the Anarchists, most of the socialists of the modern world assign the state a dignified status in the act of socialist transformation.

#### **(b) State Ownership and the Socialist Ideal**

Socialism is primarily concerned with a set of values whose promotion furthers the full blossoming of the personality of each individual. These values are equality, fraternity and

fellowship and the ultimate objective that provides the basis for such values, is the individual's mental, moral and spiritual growth apart from his material prosperity, that finally culminates in the full blossoming of the personality of each individual. Gandhi's social objective and socialist ideal that found its ideological fulfilment in Sarvodaya or all welfare of all individuals or balanced development of each individual also comprehends enthronement of such values.

But the most pertinent issue that comes to fore is, does all-enveloping state ownership of the economy—the predominant position occupied by the state in owning, managing, controlling and directing the economy—really promote the socialist objective and its cherished values? Does mere transfer of ownership of economic enterprises from private hands to the state, really promote socialist values?

Modern age is a technological age. It is characterised by improved, developed and perfected technology. Not only technological development has attained an unprecedented height; technology is being perfected almost every day and every hour. With every step in the march towards perfection of technology the humanity in each individual declines. Machine and technology that were originally meant to facilitate enjoyment of a better, safer and happier life by the individual have in fact enslaved man. Man has in fact become an appendage of the machine and he has most recently become the tender of machine and improved technology. Karl Marx and Frederic Engels wrote in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, "Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character and consequently all charm for the work man. He becomes an appendage of the machine and it is only the most simple, most monotonous and most easily acquired knack that is required of him."<sup>18</sup> What was true of the time of Marx and the early stage of the development of modern technology is comparatively more true of this age of advanced technology with its greater reliance on automation.

This age of technology that has mechanised and dehumanised human being because of too much reliance on machines and automations makes very little demand on the creativity and individuality of man. "In this set up intelligence is a disability,



a hindrance to production.”<sup>19</sup> As Wilfred Wellock has observed at another place : “The processes of mass production have gradually caused man to lose status . . . at an astonishing rate. The assembling line is making him look very small. It has cancelled the demand for his intelligence, the more automatically he can work the better. The modern machine being fool-proof dispenses with his services as it extends its domain. Thus man, having descended to the mass man, finally becomes redundant.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus with every progress towards perfection of technology, the individuality in man declines and gradually he occupies a subordinate status. This is the very negation of human dignity and human progress, and it spells the decline and degeneration of human civilisation. As Herbert Marcuse has very appropriately observed : “Its productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs and faculties.”<sup>21</sup> Such human decay due to too much of technological progress and mechanisation, when combined with monopoly capitalism, brings about not only the mental and moral ruin and devaluation of human personality but also his economic exploitation, financial ruin, poverty, destitution and deprivation. But absolute state ownership in the context of socialist transformation of the economy does in no way improve matters; rather the fusion of economic and political power combined with most up-to-date and improved technology completes the very process of human degeneration and decay and decline of all values cherished by socialism, i.e., dignity of the individual, equality, fraternity and fellowship.

A comprehensive, elaborate and all-enveloping scheme of state ownership, centralisation of economic decision making, central direction and supervision of all economic activities, and fusion of technological, political, and economic power in the hands of the state has generated a new type of slavery in the Soviet Union. It is an admitted fact that technology is essentially neutral in character and technological developments and innovations cut across essential political and ideological differences, between capitalism and socialism. As Herbert Marcuse has observed : “Modern machinery is susceptible to capitalist as well as socialist utilisation. This amounts to saying that mature capitalism and socialism, have the same technical

base . . . .”<sup>22</sup> Some of the undemocratic unhumanistic and unsocialistic developments in the Soviet Union are undoubtedly the direct corollaries of the employment of most advanced technology in a backward economy that demanded iron discipline in the initial state of development. As Herbert Marcuse has observed : “The technological society is a system of domination.”<sup>23</sup> But the major part of distortions and devaluation of socialist values is due to the concentration of economic power in the hands of the state and its fusion with absolute political power.

In the name of socialist transformation, the centralised and bureaucratised state machine perpetrates coercion, violence, terror, and dehumanisation on an unprecedented scale. Under a strictly centralised system of economy, citizens suffer both as producers and consumers. Freedom of employment is curtailed. In 1940 a law was passed that forbade freedom of employment and made quitting of job punishable. During this period and even after the Second World War, a form of slave-labour through labour camps and various other kinds of voluntary work developed. All these developments are only necessary adjuncts of concentration of economic power in the hands of the state through the operation of the system of all-pervasive state ownership. The state as the monopolist dictates terms and conditions to the workers and the workers have no freedom either to reject or to accept the terms. As Milovan Djilas has analysed the system of exploitation of labour : “Compulsory labour in the communist system is the result of monopoly of ownership over all or almost all national property. The worker finds himself in the position of having not only to sell his labour; he must sell it under conditions which are beyond his control since he is unable to seek another better employer. There is only one employer, i.e., the state. The worker has no choice but to accept the employer’s terms. The worst and most harmful element in early capitalism from the workers standpoint—the labour market—has been replaced by the monopoly over labour of the ownership of the new class. This has not made the worker any freer.”<sup>24</sup>

In the Soviet Union not only individuals have no freedom as producers; they have no freedom as consumers too. The consumers’ preferences, needs and tastes are determined by the

so-called objective necessity of the socialist state—rather of the political and party bureaucracy. Consumers' preferences are treated along with other freedoms as bourgeois prejudices and manifestation of bourgeois mentality. Individual tastes and preferences are made to conform to the dictates of the bureaucracy.

Thus human freedom that is so much valued by democrats and socialists are looked down upon with contempt. Socialist ethics and morality are twisted to suit the growing authority of the New Class of Political and Party bureaucracy. The traditional human liberties are made to succumb to censorship and regimentation practised in the name of positive liberty. As Herbert Marcuse has observed : "The realm of legitimate unfreedom was vastly extended and the surrender of the natural liberty of the individual was openly and methodically enforced, in spheres of the human existence which remained sacrosanct in the West."<sup>25</sup> Speaking about the problems of freedom in Yugoslavia under a centralised and bureaucratised system of socialist reconstruction, Milovan Djilas has equally observed : "In Yugoslavia, the problem is to achieve political freedoms and the liberation of huge nationalised industries and private concerns, from the managerial grip of a self-perpetuating party bureaucracy."<sup>26</sup>

The eclipse of other socialist values like equality, fraternity, and fellowship is caused by the emergence of the "New Class" of political and party bureaucrats who constitute a superior and supreme strata not only in the hierarchy of state but also of the society. The society has become once again hierarchical as a result of the emergence of this "New Class". The vision of a class-less society has faded. The only change that is visible is a change in respect of the basis of class stratification. Whereas the former class divisions and social stratifications were based on wealth and property or on the economic foundation, the new class divisions and stratifications are based on exercise of economic and political power.

The irrationalities that have emerged in the Soviet Union are being defended on the ground that the system is perpetrated by the proletariat in power for the sake of promoting the proletarian interests and welfare. It is contended by the defenders of the system that although the system is dictatorial,

totalitarian and tyrannical, yet the subject and the object of coercion are identical and the coercion is perpetrated for the sake of the long term interest of the proletariat. . It is, they feel, in the interest of the proletariat to be so coerced. As Herbert Marcuse has observed : "The class identity between the subject and the object of the state now tends to transform, coercion into rational administration."<sup>27</sup>

It is sometimes contended that the telescoping of the development of a several generations into a few decades, and the desire to catch up with the western standard within a short span of time, so as to ensure a system of equality, fraternity and fellowship grounded on economic prosperity, have landed the Soviet Union in a state of complete economic and political regimentation. As Professor Paul A Baran, himself a Marxist, has tried to rationalize the situation prevalent there : "It is not socialism, that can be fairly charged with the misdeeds of Stalin and his puppets; it is the political system that evolved from the drive to develop at breakneck speed a backward country threatened by foreign aggression and in face of internal resistance."<sup>28</sup> But as Harbert Marcuse has posed the issue : "If the elimination of libertarian ethics belongs to the requirements of primary industrialisation, why does the struggle against these ethics continue after the creation of the industrial base with growing productivity and social wealth ?"<sup>29</sup>

The continuance of the comprehensive apparatus of coercion, violence, forced labour and intellectual and physical tyranny after over 50 years of experimentation with socialist economic development, sounds comparatively odd, absurd and ironical. As Herbert Marcuse has further observed : "Thus it is only an apparent paradox that Soviet ethical philosophy continues to taboo . . . . the liberatarian ideas of the revolutionary period at a stage when their realisation seems more logical than at the stage of extreme scarcity and weakness."<sup>30</sup>

The crux of the problem lies in the fusion of economic and political power and over-centralisation of political and economic authority.<sup>31</sup> Concentration of either political or economic power by itself poses a grave threat to the individual liberty and personality. Accordingly despotism as a form of government and capitalism as a form of economy have been rejected by the civilised world. But when absolute economic power in

form of overpowering and all pervasive state ownership is combined with absolute political power, that spells the ruin of all socialist values. Accordingly Mr. M. N. Roy once an impassioned communist has very appropriately observed : "The abolition of private property, state ownership of the means of production, and planned economy, do not themselves end exploitation of labour, nor lead to an equal distribution of wealth. By disregarding individual freedom on the pleas of taking the fullest advantage of technology, of efficiency and collective effort, planned economy, defeats its own purpose. Instead of ushering in a higher form of democracy on the basis of economic equality and social justice, it may establish a political dictatorship."<sup>32</sup>

Thus the socialist ideal and socialist values are being distorted and profaned as a result of complete fusion of economic power with political power and by the identification of public or social ownership with state ownership. The paramount ideal of human dignity, equality, fraternity and fellowship are being shattered because of the "monopoly of management and control" enjoyed by the political and party bureaucracy, that emerge as a necessary consequence of complete fusion of economic power with political power, and identification of public ownership with state ownership.<sup>33</sup> Because of such developments the social ownership in the form of state ownership really degenerates into ownership of political and party bureaucracy. As Milovan Djilas has very aptly observed : "In Communist countries, the party bureaucracy has been concealing under a coating of ostensible probity and legal equivocation its real proprietorial nature which is grasping and predatory."<sup>34</sup> This political and party bureaucracy in the name of state ownership and under the cover of social or public ownership, control, torture, tyrannise and terrorise the public. Such bureaucratic distortion of the system, strips the state-owned enterprises of their public or socialist character. Hence as Oscar Lange has observed : "In such cases socialist character of the ownership of the means of production becomes rather fictitious."<sup>35</sup>

The problem therefore is one of making public ownership or social ownership a reality. Since under a system of all-pervasive state ownership, all the economic powers are concentrated in the hands of the state, authority is placed at the disposal of

the bureaucracy for distorting the system. Since under a system of all-pervasive state ownership the legal owners of the economy—the society or the public—have no avenue open for really owning and controlling the economy, the bureaucracy perpetrates its tyranny. Hence what is important in investing public ownership or social ownership with a real “public”, “social” or socialist character is transfer of economic power from the hands of the state as far as possible and acquisition of control over the economy by the society or the community. Speaking in the context of Soviet Economy, Herbert Marcuse has observed : “Obviously ‘the people’ who constitutionally owns the means of production do not control them. Control therefore and not ownership must be the decisive factor.”<sup>36</sup> Oscar Lange is equally of opinion that the socialist enterprises must be self-governing bodies.<sup>37</sup>

Hence in order to make social ownership, or public ownership or socialist ownership real, the economy must be liberated from the all-enveloping and overwhelming grip of the state and the control of the party and political bureaucracy. For effecting the same there must be decentralisation of ownership and control and gradual attenuation of the functions of the state.<sup>38</sup>

**(c) No *a priori* Principle**

Of course the communist countries, that are not tired of proclaiming that they are waging their battle for erecting a socialist instead of a communist society, in conformity with the Marxian tradition, rely too heavily on the state for the sake of socialist transformation. But they do not thereby make absolute and unqualified reliance on the all-embracing and all-enveloping state, as the most potent weapon and the chief apparatus of socialist transformation, an *a priori* principle that has universal validity in all countries at all times and in all circumstances irrespective of the objective situation prevalent, in the country that accepts the process of socialist transformation. An analysis of the objective situation prevalent in some of the countries in the communist world that place the state at the centre of socialist reconstruction shall demonstrate beyond doubt that such unqualified reliance on the state is not an invincible and inviolable principle that has universal applicability in all countries at all times and in all circumstances.

*(i) Soviet Experiments*

In the Soviet Union, the State assumed a predominant and most positive role in the sphere of socialisation of economy and socialist transformation because of the peculiar objective situation and historical condition that prevailed in the country after the Bolshevik Revolution. The fabric of Russia's economic life had been completely disrupted. Her industrial and agricultural economy had entirely broken down. The transportation system had collapsed. Shortage of fuel and food, aggravated by the dislocation in the railway and transport system, brought about a disastrous fall in industrial productivity. "Shortage of materials threatened to paralyse industry. Famine walked in the streets of Moscow and Petrograde."<sup>39</sup> Shortage of production in the factories due to under-utilisation of Russia's industrial capacity, unleashed a vicious circle of unemployment and starvation, which further reduced the productivity of the workers. "Starvation and semi-starvation grievously lowered the intensity of work and the efficiency of industrial worker, swelled absenteeism, and encouraged petty theft and speculation as means of supplementing starvation rations."<sup>40</sup> It has been estimated that by 1920 the number of workers employed in industry was less than half of the pre-war figure, that the average productivity per worker had fallen to 30-35 percent, and the total output of industry to the figure of 14.5 percent. Absenteeism in industry sometimes soared upto about 60 percent and normally exceeded 30 percent. A Moscow worker's monthly wage in 1920 was only enough to keep him alive with normal efficiency for about eleven to thirteen days. "At the worst period, the meagre daily bread ration of one eighth of a pound, for worker was issued only on alternate days."<sup>41</sup>

The Bolshevik regime desired to lift the nation from the morass of complete economic collapse and disorganisation; yet the Proletarian state's immediate preoccupation was never wholesale take-over of the economy but mere seizure of some key positions in the economy that is the normal feature of even some modern welfare states. Its primary concern was checking the spread of economic disintegration and strike of capital and for achieving the end, it took into confidence at the initial

stage private capitalists, industrialists and private entrepreneurs. As Lenin has spoken about the system : "The state power made an attempt to pass to the new social relationship while adapting itself to the conditions then prevailing, as much as possible, as gradually as possible and breaking with the old as little as possible."<sup>42</sup>

In the initial stage, the Bolshevik regime adopted a cautious policy in respect of state ownership. The state took over the joint-stock banks in order to obviate the obstruction and sabotage employed by the employers. As it has been observed : "Private banks sabotaged workers control, financed counter revolutionaries, and refused to cash cheques drawn by nationalised enterprises. Apart from hampering economic activity this worsened the position of factory and office employees."<sup>43</sup> Besides the new regime also continued the state monopoly in grain trade that was introduced during the period of provisional government. Only some industries that were engaged in war work, were taken into state ownership on strategic grounds. The decree of December 18, 1917 laid down the conditions for the take over of the industry by the state, i.e., nationalisation in case of refusal of the owner to submit to workers' control and closing down or abandonment of the works by its owners. Until May 1918, there was no case of a whole industry being taken over by the state. In May only sugar industry was taken over by the state to be followed by the take over of the industries of direct importance to the consumers like, oil, watches, coffee, spices and yarn. Hence as it has been observed : "In one half of the cases where nationalisation of individual enterprises took place, in these early months, the reason stated was the 'sabotage' of the owner, and not infrequently, the fact that he had closed his business and emigrated until counter-revolution should restore for him a more congenial environment."<sup>44</sup>

Lenin, the architect of the Bolshevik Revolution and the chief architect of Soviet reconstruction followed almost a policy of mixed economy after the Revolution. His critics branded his concessions for the bourgeois engineers, economists and industrialists as, "coalition with the bourgeoisie". Lenin in his pamphlet *The Principal Tasks of Our Day : Left Wing Childishness, and Petit Bourgeois Mentality* spoke of a type of "State



Capitalism", under which "gigantic step forward" shall be taken towards socialist transformation. During this period of "State Capitalism" or the "period of transition between capitalism and socialism" as Lenin felt "elements of both capitalism and socialism" were intermixed, and rationally combined. Thus Lenin wanted to "buy off the bourgeoisie" who were experienced organisers, and entrepreneurs and were willing to subserve the objectives of socialist state. Accordingly when pressure was exerted on him from the side of the proletariat for the take over of certain enterprises, Lenin used his sense of caution and creative discrimination. "When workers delegations came to me with complaints against the factory owners," Lenin once said, "I always said to them you want your factory nationalised. Well and good, we have the decree ready and can sign it in a moment. But tell me, can you take the organisation into your own hands? Do you know how and what you produce? And do you know the relations between your product and the Russian and international market? And inevitably it transpired that they knew nothing. There was nothing written about such matters, in the Bolshevik text books, or even in those of the Mensheviks."<sup>45</sup> In a pamphlet written in 1918 against the so-called "Left Communists" he spoke of a period of transition from capitalism to socialism, containing "elements, particles, pieces of both capitalism and socialism".<sup>46</sup>

Thus the Bolshevik regime in Russia was not bent upon wholesale socialisation of the economy in the sense that the state shall assume a predominant position in the economy and the process of socialisation shall necessarily mean state ownership of all sectors of economy. Lenin immediately after the Revolution, with his suspicion of the bourgeois state and advocacy for the gradual withering away of the proletarian state, was not at the first instance, favourably disposed towards extensive socialisation and state ownership; but the hands of the Bolshevik regime were almost forced to undertake a greater dose of state ownership.

In the first place the workers themselves took initiative in the matter of state take-over of many industrial undertakings. Many factory committees that were entitled under the Decree on Workers' Control of November 14, 1917, to "supervise the

management” and “to determine a minimum of production” went beyond their legal powers and even in violation of Article 9 that forbade committees “to take possession of the enterprises”, except with the sanction of the higher authorities, defied the higher authorities and took over management of factories into their own hands. It has been estimated that of the individual firms that had been taken over by the state prior to July 1918, only about 100 had been nationalised by a decree of the Centre while over 400 had been nationalised on the initiative of local organisations.<sup>47</sup> The state simply regularised the *fait accompli* to prevent the upsurge of Syndicalist tendency.

The workers’ initiative in the taking over of industry was whipped up by the intransigence of the employers. A large number of the employers either defied the factory committees or took the earliest opportunity to close down the firm and move out with the intention to return only after restoration of normalcy. Since it further aggravated the condition of the workers by forcing upon them unemployment and starvation, the workers themselves seized the opportunity and fought against the obstructionist and sabotaging tendency of the employers by invading the office, ejecting the owners or managers and taking over the management. The Supreme Economic Council (Vesenkha) was almost forced to regulate the work in these factories. As the report of the Supreme Economic Council to the Eighth Congress of Soviets in December 1920 indicates : “Vesenkha clearly realised the necessity for a coordinated plan of nationalisation on definite lines. But in the first period it did not have the statistical apparatus or the administrative apparatus, it did not have links with the localities, and accordingly lacking sufficient local organs and ‘cadres’ of workers, it was compelled to bring within its purview and to try to handle, an unnecessary large number of acting economic enterprises a fact which made the organisation of production, extremely difficult.”<sup>48</sup>

Apart from the economic factors that forced the pace of state ownership and control, the intervention of foreign powers and the eruption of civil war precipitated the steps towards further state ownership and control. The withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the War and the consolidation of Soviet power were received with alarm in the West that attempted to over-

throw the revolutionary regime with the help of domestic bourgeoisie. The Soviet Union was attacked by 14 countries on the North and the Far East, and the counter-revolutionary armies in the North Caucasus. The Germans subjected the Ukraine to a wanton riot of plunder and violence and the German and Turkish troops held the Transcaucasus. A counter-revolutionary government was set up in Samara on the Volga and another in Omsk, Siberia. Thus the country's principal industrial and farming areas that accounted for three quarters of its territory were invaded. "Naturally the supply of raw materials and fuel for industrial enterprises, and of food and consumer goods for population has become a daily agony."<sup>49</sup> But the national bourgeoisie tried to cash on the distress of the revolutionary regime. Their attitude towards the government hardened and the halting co-operation that they extended to the government earlier, started to evaporate quite soon. They non-co-operated with the government and tried to sabotage the governmental measures to grapple with foreign aggression and civil war.

For the government, the defence of the realm and the revolution took precedence over all other considerations. Victory in the war against foreign invaders and the counter-revolutionary cliche became the primary concern. Direct control over production quickly became an urgent necessity both to combat sabotage, and ensure priority for military supplies. As Lenin said later : "In March or April 1918, as against methods of gradual transition we began to discuss methods of struggle to be directed, mainly towards the expropriation of the expropriators . . . ."<sup>50</sup> Thus the Bolshevik regime for the sake of self-defence and for consolidation of its position now embarked upon a policy of all enveloping state ownership. As it has been very appropriately observed : "The over-all nationalisation of industries inexpedient under peacetime conditions was now a vital need. Only rigorous expropriation of the property of counter-revolutionary capitalist elements could prevent the use of the industry against Soviet power, whole-sale sabotage and a complete economic collapse, which would have doomed the socialist republic. The Soviet state faced the alternative : either the industry would be

nationalised or the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie would use it for a military suppression of the revolution. Thus a large scale nationalisation of the industry began.”<sup>51</sup>

Maurice Dobb in explaining the sudden change of strategy in Soviet Union in favour of all-enveloping State-ownership has also observed: “Where there was sabotage from owners or managerial staff, or chaos resulting from the sectional activities of the factory committees, there was now no alternative for the central government than to declare the enterprise nationalised.”<sup>52</sup> Thus the objective situation prevalent in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik seizure of political power, i.e., the state of economic decay, foreign aggression and civil war, set the pace of state-ownership.

*(ii) Chinese Experience*

The pace and rate of state-ownership of the economy of China after the communist take-over, was equally determined by the objective factors peculiar to China. China was a virgin field for foreign exploitation for about a century before the Communist take-over, and foreign industrial, banking, commercial and financial interests were deeply entrenched in the economy. “A point of capital importance,” observed R. H. Tawney, “both for the economic and political future of the country is the fact that backward as her heavy industries are, they are largely outside Chinese control.”<sup>53</sup> Great Britain, Japan, U.S.A., France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Czarist Russia had all invested in China and controlled her economy. Foreign capital particularly the Japanese capital and the British capital controlled 72 percent of coal output. In iron and steel, foreign capital controlled 90 percent by 1928. By 1930, the percentage of foreign ownership in textile industry had risen to 80 percent.<sup>54</sup> Foreign capital is estimated to have formed 73·8 percent of the total industrial capital of China (excluding Manchuria) in 1936.<sup>55</sup> In terms of the actual capital, the total foreign investment in economic undertakings increased from \$ 503·2 millions in 1902 to \$ 8320·3 millions in 1945. Of all the foreign powers, Japan’s financial interest in China was most significant. Japan consolidated her position in China specially after the Sino-Japanese war and came to control 63% of North China’s coal output and 62% of other

industrial production in the area. She had an even greater hold in North East China (Manchuria) where in 1945, Japanese capital controlled 98·8 percent of all industrial capital.<sup>56</sup> Whereas in 1902 Japanese capital totalled 1 million U.S. dollars, in 1945 it reached almost \$ 6,493 million. In 1945 83·3 percent of all foreign capital invested in China was Japanese. Hence it has been observed : “Japanese capital controlled thus nearly two-thirds of Chinese modern industry.”<sup>57</sup> With the fall of Japan in the Second World War, this vast Japanese economic empire in China fell to the lot of the Kuomintang regime. “The fact that Japanese property was virtually ownerless after the War made it possible for the Kuomintang vastly to enlarge on the theme of state ownership.”<sup>58</sup>

After the Kuomintang take-over of the Japanese capital assets in China, the state became a major partner in the Chinese economy. The state became responsible for 64 percent of the coal output, nearly 70 percent of tin, and 90 percent of the sugar output in 1947.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the state had absolute control over banking since the state banks held 92% of all bank deposits in China. The Chinese Petroleum Company, a state-owned company had monopoly rights in respect of all oil production and refining in China. The state-owned industries, flourished under the Kuomintang regime, after the War and before the Communist take-over, due to its access to raw materials, foreign exchange, and transport facilities. With the Communist victory in the civil war, the socialist regime had a windfall of state-owned enterprises. As it has been very appropriately observed : “With the fall of the Kuomintang, Mao Tse Tung inherited a completely state-owned industrial complex in Manchuria and a large state-owned sector in China proper.”<sup>60</sup>

Apart from the Japanese assets that the socialist regime of China inherited from the Kuomintang regime, the expropriation of other foreign capital also helped the rise in the state's share in industry, banking and trade. The British, the American and other foreign assets were either requisitioned or frozen and the Communist regime completed the process, started by the Kuomintang regime after the fall of Japan. As a result of all such measures, the state's share in the industry rose from 33·9

percent in 1949 to 63 percent in 1955. Thus as it has been observed : "Foreign ownership of the most important sectors of the urban economy has greatly facilitated the establishment of state control over industry."<sup>61</sup>

Yet the Communist regime of China from the very beginning pursued a cautious policy in respect of state ownership. Although the new regime inherited from the Kuomintang regime a very large segment of economy as the property of the state, it equally inherited a state of economic backwardness, and underdevelopment that was aggravated due to War and the Civil War. Lack of financial resources for development and restoration of the war-torn-economy demanded a pragmatic assessment of the objective conditions and requirements and formulation of a rationalistic policy that fulfils the twin objectives of economic rehabilitation and socialistic reconstruction. The new regime decided to cash on the financial capital and ingenuity of private enterprise and harness their resources and services for the sake of socialist reconstruction.

Therefore, after the liberation, the Communist regime pursued a liberal policy in respect of the private sector. Instead of embarking upon a policy of wholesale nationalisation or state ownership at a breakneck speed, the policy of state or social ownership took cognisance of the role of the private sector and assigned it a dignified place in the scheme of socialist reconstruction. Mao Tse-Tung as late as 1945 had held out assurance to the people and particularly the capitalist elements : "The programme of the revolution is not to abolish private property, but to protect private property in general; the results of this revolution will clear the way for the development of capitalism."<sup>62</sup> The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China voiced the same spirit when it said in the May Day slogan of 1950 : "Chinese workers in public and private enterprise ! The development of production is our highest interest and task—exert your effort to develop production ! . . . Members of the Chinese working-class ! Consolidate your ranks and unite with the national bourgeoisie."<sup>63</sup>

Attractive terms were offered to the private sector to take advantage of productive and entrepreneurial ability and gear them to the need of a socialist economy of affluence. On June 24, 1952, Chen Yun, Vice-Premier and Chairman of the

Committee of Financial and Economic Affairs of the General Administrative Council said in an address to the Conference of the All China Federation of Industrial and Commercial circles, "Private factories will according to concrete conditions be guaranteed a profit of around 10, 20 or even upto 30 percent on their capital, under conditions of normal and rational operation."<sup>64</sup> Thus as it has been appropriately observed : "Private enterprise was permitted to function and given all assistance to restore and increase production, and it was also made clear that it i.e., private enterprise, would be assigned a role of its own in industrial rehabilitation and development."<sup>65</sup>

The terms and treatment offered to the private sector by the Communist regime of China were so much attractive that many industrialists who had fled the country, returned after 'Liberation'. The new regime that had undertaken the task of socialist transformation provided so much elbow-room to the private sector and moved so cautiously in respect of extending the sphere of state ownership that as a matter of fact private sector flourished side by side with the public sector. A report of September 18, 1952 stated : "According to figures for eight major cities including Shanghai and Tientsin the number of private, industrial and commercial undertaking increased by 27 percent in the two years ending December 1951. The total value of private industrial output has increased by some 70 percent in past three years."<sup>66</sup>

### *(iii) Czechoslovakian Experiment*

The Communist coup of Czechoslovakia of February, 1948 precipitated the progress towards state ownership of the economy. By January 1949 the state sector absorbed on the basis of nationalisation measures, 89·2 percent of the gainfully employed. In sectors like Metal and Power Plant, the state sector embraced over 95 percent of the gainfully employed. In industries like textiles, clothing, and hides and leather, the coverage was 93·4%, 82·9% and 94·2% respectively. On the average these entailed an absorption of over 72 percent of the technical units. By 1949 when the process of over-all nationalisation in manufacture was virtually completed, the private sector had a clientele of only 3·6 percent of total employment.<sup>67</sup>

But the nationalisation measure or the process of acquisition of ownership of industrial assets by the state had started even before the Communist coup. The confiscation of ex-enemy property or all collaborationist-owned undertakings opened up new vistas for state ownership. On the ground of "national interest" or "bigness" of given enterprise the Presidential Decree of 1945 brought within the scope of state ownership a very wide section of the economy. All the mines of the country, all power plants which did not serve non-nationalised industries, iron and steel works and rolling mills, and a lot of other industries were brought under state ownership and management : "The nationalisation laws of 1945 brought into the state sector around 57·1 % of the total industrial labour force."<sup>68</sup> By January 1948, before the Communist coup and the unfolding of the drama of galloping nationalisation, 63·9 percent of labour force gainfully employed had been brought under the state sector. Thus before the real socialist transformation had commenced under the Communist regime, about 65% of the industrial sector of the Czech-economy had been brought under direct ownership and management of the state. The Communist regime merely speeded up the pace of state ownership.

Hence the extent of state ownership as an instrument of socialist transformation is dependent on the objective situation prevalent in the country that embarks upon the policy of socialist transformation. There is no hard and fast rule as to the extent of state ownership that can justify whether an economic or social system is socialist or otherwise. As Alexander Eckstein has observed : "Marxism . . . was never intended as a blue-print for the socialist order."<sup>69</sup> Neither the Soviet nor the Chinese, nor the Czechoslovakian experiment in state ownership provides a fool-proof model of socialist transformation for application without modification in all countries embarking upon socialist transformation, irrespective of the prevailing objective conditions. Hence as Oscar Lange has observed in respect of the role of the state in the construction and guidance of the socialist economy : "This role varies in the different stages of its development . . . . This process may be sudden or more or less gradual."<sup>70</sup>



**(d) State Ownership and the Modern Trend**

Although the authors of Scientific Socialism with their passion for economic liberty and social justice for millions advocated centralisation of instruments of production in the hands of the state,<sup>71</sup> and the impassioned egalitarians of the communist world with their ardent desire to develop an egalitarian society at a breakneck speed leaned too confidently on the state as an instrument of socialist transformation the modern trend is in favour of "non-state forms of socialism" as far as possible or release of socialism from the bond of all-embracing state ownership.

As discussed, Soviet Union, the vast country that experimented socialism on a grand scale, initially adopted a comparatively cautious policy in respect of state ownership. The state sector confined its jurisdiction to banking, strategic and key industries. Monopoly over grain trade etc. allowing the private sector and the national bourgeoisie to operate within the strategic control of the state to help augmentation of the social wealth. Even the foreign capitalists were shown sympathetic gesture, and offer of "Mixed Companies" were extended to them.<sup>72</sup> Only when foreign intervention, eruption of civil war, and sabotage of the national bourgeoisie and all enemies of Revolution posed a grave threat to the new regime and threatened to paralyse the economic system, while the new regime was just trying to consolidate its position after the Revolution, that the grip of state ownership was extended. The hands of the Bolshevik regime were almost forced in the direction of a greater dose of state ownership.

The failure of the system of War Communism in the Soviet Union, characterised by an overwhelming grip of the state over the economy and subsequent introduction of the New Economic Policy by Lenin to tide over the economic crisis, amply demonstrate the limitations from which a system of all embracing state-ownership suffers. Under the system of War Communism, with the state assuming the role of supreme producer and director of the economy, production in farms and in the factories dwindled and the economy was almost on the verge of complete paralysis. The nationalisation measures of November 1920 that brought within the fold of state sector even small factories which ran to many thousands, and the

clamping of requisition measures on farmers sparked off discontent among petty producers and farmers, and precipitated the breach between the revolutionary regime and a vast section of the citizens. Under the system of New Economic Policy agricultural and industrial sectors were liberated from the firm grip of the state and allowed freedom of operation. The peasantry was given freedom to dispose of the surplus produce and the industry was accorded freedom in management, procurement of finance and raw materials, and disposal of the finished products. That certain amount of denationalisation particularly in respect of small enterprises and workshops took place, co-operatives were restored their financial independence, and in retail trade, private merchants were encouraged, clearly demonstrate, the acknowledgement by the ruling authority, of the barrenness of the policy of sole reliance on the state for socialist transformation. The buoyancy that the economy acquired as a result of introduction of the New Economic Policy, proved unequivocally that dogmatism in respect of state ownership pays very poor socialist dividends. Further, regimentation of the economy through absolute state ownership and control during the Stalin era no doubt succeeded in ushering in an era of industrial and technological prosperity and a period of economic viability, but socialist values like freedom, equality, fraternity and fellowship suffered serious casualties under the domination of a "New Class" of political and party bureaucrats. The launching of the Sputnik and earth satellites became possible under the liberalised system introduced by N. Khrushchev.

**(i) *China***

The Chinese experiment in socialism from the very beginning is relatively less rigid in respect of state ownership. The Chinese socialist economy has adopted a strategy completely different from the Soviet technique of socialist transformation. China, whose political atmosphere after the triumph of the Revolution was relatively "peaceful"<sup>73</sup> lent a different tone to the socialist developmental strategy and here although the state sector captured the "commanding heights" of the economy, the economic system in general apart from embracing state ownership, also embraces co-operative

ownership, individual ownership by handicraftsmen and capitalist ownership. The socialist economy of China has been characterised, because of assimilation of different forms of ownership within the system as a system of "mixed" economy<sup>74</sup> although it differs from the system of mixed economy prevalent in western countries. The system is therefore "not identical with the Soviet Russian system with its state socialism in all industry and commerce, and its mechanised collective farms in agriculture."<sup>75</sup>

The Common Programme adopted by the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference held in Peking on September 2, 1949, that determined the nature and shape of the economy of Communist China till the adoption of the Constitution in 1954, while according the state the power to capture the commanding heights of the economy, took cognisance of the co-operative sector, the privately owned handicraft sector, and the capitalist sector. Under Article 26 of the Common Programme, the state was required to "co-ordinate and regulate state owned economy, co-operative economy, the individual economy of peasants and handicraftsmen, private capitalist economy, and state capitalist economy, in their spheres of operations, supply of raw materials, marketing, labour conditions, technical equipment, policies of public and general finance etc."<sup>76</sup> What is important in this Article from the standpoint of the pattern of the Chinese socialist economy is not the regulation or control but the place assigned to sectors other than state sector in the socialist economy. Article 29 of the Common Programme, while considering co-operative sector as an "important component" of the socialist economy said, "The People's Government shall foster its development and accord it preferential treatment."<sup>77</sup> Under Article 30 of the Programme, the state undertook to "encourage the active operation of all private enterprises beneficial to the national welfare", and under Article 31, to ensure that "whenever necessary, and possible, private capital shall be encouraged to develop in the direction of state-capitalism." Thus at the initial stage of the socialist construction, which the Chinese termed as "New Democracy", the socialist system was not grounded on the principle of all-embracing state ownership.

The Constitution of Communist China framed in 1954, in

Article 5, gives due weightage to sectors other than the state sector, i.e. "co-operative ownership", "ownership by individual working people" and "capitalist ownership". Article 7, emphasising on importance of co-operative sector provides : "The state protects the property of the co-operatives, encourages, guides and helps the development of the co-operative sector of the economy. It regards the promotion of producers' co-operatives, as the chief means for the transformation of individual farming and individual handicrafts." Under Article 9 of the Constitution, rights of handicraftsmen, and other non-agricultural working people to own their means of production have been protected, and the state undertakes to help this sector to "improve their enterprises". As per Article 10 of the Constitution, the state aspires to make use of the "positive sides of capitalist industry and commerce which are beneficial to national welfare" and "restricts their negative sides". Whereas the long term objective of the state is to "restrict and transform them", they were to be encouraged during the transitional period.

As the data available indicate, in 1955 even after six years of assumption of power by the Communist regime, 37% of the gross industrial output were produced by the non-state sector, i.e. by the joint-enterprises, co-operative sector and the private sector. The Chinese system of socialist economy is significant in the sense that not only private sector was allowed to continue; it was also so much encouraged that the share of state orders in the output of private industry in the whole of China rose from 12 percent in 1949 to 82 percent in 1955.<sup>78</sup> The private capitalists were not only assigned a legitimate role in the system; joint state-private enterprises termed as "state-capitalist" enterprises were assured a secure and a more attractive future. Li Wei-han, Vice-Chairman of the Committee of Financial and Economic Affairs of the Government Administrative Council said on September 2, 1954 : "Following the institution of public private joint operation, profits of enterprises in general will be more than at the time of private operations and this would enable private shareholders to earn more than at the time of private operations."<sup>79</sup> The capitalists were further assured that even when the New Democracy blossoms into "Socialism", the private capitalists shall occupy a dignified

place in the system as managers of the Socialist Society. As Liu Shao Chi put it in an address to a conference of businessmen at Tientsin : "You may be afraid of what will happen to you and your families when we develop from New Democracy to Socialism. But you need not really be afraid. If you do a really good job in developing your business, and train your children to be first class technical experts, you will be the obvious people to put in charge of the nationalised enterprise, and you may find that you earn more as managers of a socialised enterprise than as owners."<sup>80</sup>

Thus the socialist strategists of Communist China while planning for an egalitarian society, were not fanatically predisposed towards an all-embracing system of state ownership. They adopted a more rationalistic system, prompted by "the poverty of personnel prepared for economic management and by the need of utilising for construction of socialism, the knowledge of the national bourgeoisie and of the middle strata."<sup>81</sup> As a result of so much of concession to the private sector and particularly the private capitalists, doubts have been expressed whether the system would ever lead to the emergence of an egalitarian society. As Ygael Gluckstein has posed the problem : "The image of 'Socialism', which the Communist Leaders try to raise in the minds of industrialists and merchants has, as we have seen, nothing to do with egalitarianism. It is the image of a Managerial Society or more correctly, of Bureaucratic State Capitalism. Those who had privileges in the past, will continue as managers of industry and commerce, to have the same or even bigger advantages in the future."<sup>82</sup> Yet the architects of Chinese socialism are firmly of opinion that a system of all-embracing state ownership may not succeed in delivering an egalitarian society of affluence. Hence apart from state ownership, they have adopted the co-operative sector, small scale and handicraft sector, private capitalist sector and joint "state-capitalist" sector as instruments of socialist transformation.

#### (ii) *Yugoslavia*

Yugoslavia during the early period of its infatuation with socialism (rather Communism) became an ardent camp-follower of the Soviet Union and like its big brother

in the Communist father-land, identified social ownership with state ownership. The state sector whose domain was extended by confiscated property of ex-enemies, collaborationists, and war profiteers, received further accretion in 1948 when nationalisation was extended to cover not only all enterprises of local interest but also village type industries of local origin. In 1946-47 the state sector already held the whole of Industry on the federal and republican levels and 70 percent of the local industries. Finally in 1948, the whole industry, including that of local interest, was transferred to the state.<sup>83</sup> The socialist system of Yugoslavia no doubt accommodated private ownership in crafts, co-operative, and collective farms and private ownership in land; but the state sector not only captured the "commanding height" of the economy but occupied the most dominant position standing like a great colossus. With the domineering state sector, came centralisation of control and decisions, bureaucratisation, alienation of workers from means of production and work, and their reduction once again to the level of wage-earners.

From 1948 Yugoslavia chartered a new path to socialism and evolved a new technique of social ownership, bidding good-bye to the Soviet model of identification of social ownership with state ownership. Attempts have been made to put a stop to the hypertrophy of the state apparatus and its centralised, bureaucratised and authoritarian structures so as to liberate the workers from all forms of alienation and facilitate full blossoming of their personality. The first step in this direction was taken at the beginning of 1950 when the state apparatus suffered a major diminution of its power by abolition of 100,000 government posts. There was at the first instance transfer of enterprises producing consumers' goods such as textiles and shoes from federal authority to that of the People's Republics. Subsequently a whole series of industries, i.e. coal, chemicals, glass, paper, food-processing, tobacco, cement, printing, federal agricultural enterprises, etc. were transferred from the federal authority. There remained under federal control only key producers goods industries, like oil-industry, metallurgy, and machine construction, and building and transport.<sup>84</sup> The second major step was the enactment of the law of June 27, 1950, transferring management of the factories to

the workers.<sup>85</sup> The Yugoslavian Constitution of 1963 has proclaimed in categorical terms that the inviolable basis of the system is social instead of state ownership of the means of production, aiming at abolition of man's alienation from the means of production and other conditions of labour. "Man's labour is the only ... basis for the management of social resources."<sup>86</sup>

The policy since 1950 is one of making the state property, social property, administered by the entire body of workers and not only the ostensibly omniscient state. The policy is directed at replacement of a centralised and bureaucratised state machine by a system of autonomy in which millions of workers take decisions that are vital to their destiny. The autonomy of workers of all categories, manual and intellectual, in decision making has been asserted. A system of self-management in industries has been introduced under which workers through Workers' Councils, determine the over-all economic policy of the enterprises in which they work. According to Article 10 of the Constitution, the workers decide "as directly as possible" not only the condition of labour but also the allocation of income or surplus-value. In smaller factories, the Workers' Council covers the entire labour force whereas in larger undertakings, the Council consists of members elected by all the employees. The Workers' Council constitutes the highest policy-making organ of any enterprise. The Managing Board—the executive body of the enterprises—is a creation of the Workers' Council elected by the Council, and it implements the policy of the Council. The Council determines the production and personnel policy of the enterprise, the quality, quantity and kind of products and distribution of profits. It also finalises the investment policy of the enterprise and rates of pay of the employees. The production units enjoy complete freedom for contracting with foreign firms for import of foreign capital and for setting up joint companies.

Apart from introduction of workers' management in industry that has undermined centralisation, bureaucratisation and the dominance of the state sector in the economy, liberalisation has taken the form of dissolution of collective farm, and establishment of private peasant holdings, revival of private enterprise in service industries and establishment of joint owned

enterprises.<sup>87</sup>

All these measures, i.e. decentralisation of industries, transfer of a bulk of them for management by the Republics, introduction of workers' control and management and establishment of private enterprise in service industries are positive steps in the direction of underplaying the importance of the state as an instrument of socialist transformation. As it has been observed: "The point to be noted is that Yugoslav socialism has rejected the concept of the state as the incarnation of an omnipotent consciousness which can and should determine the movement of economic forces in minute detail."<sup>88</sup> Nicolas Spulber went a step ahead when he said: "The underlying idea of the reform is the preparation of conditions for the 'withering away' of the state and the prevention of a bureaucracy with vested interests."<sup>89</sup>

### **(iii) Poland**

The state ownership that assumed greater and greater dimension in Poland in the closing days of the Second World War culminated in the Polish Nationalisation Law of January 3, 1946. Although under this law the state was to take over an enormous field of Polish industry, and Article 3 of this law authorised the Government, to extend its field of operation to cover other industries that remained outside the pale of state ownership by mere Governmental decree, the nationalisation scheme also provided for the possibility of transfer of some state undertakings to the co-operative sector.<sup>90</sup> Article 2, Paragraph 4 of a special law enacted by the Polish regime to preserve a "substantial" sector of the economy in private hands and "encourage private initiative" specified that "newly created private enterprise would not be transferred to the state even if they were capable of employing more than 50 workers per shift". Article 3 of the same law assured the owners of private enterprises, "... of the liberty to develop these undertakings, and of state assistance as far as their economic activity was concerned within the frame-work of the national economic plan." Thus Poland's road to socialism consisted of a three-tier system of economy with Private Sector, Co-operative Sector and the State Sector constituting the hierarchy. The private sector occupied a pre-eminent



position in the sphere of handicraft and in the year 1948, there were 178,581 workshops with 383,837 employees in the private sector.<sup>91</sup>

Thus the modern trend in respect of socialist economy as is evident from a survey of the position in some of the Communist countries, is no longer a system of all-embracing state ownership. Although the Soviet Union adopted a hard line in respect of state ownership because of the objective situation that enveloped the country after the Revolution, Lenin said : "Socialism, is not the result of decrees that came from above. Administrative and bureaucratic automatism is foreign to its nature; living, creative socialism is the work of the popular masses themselves."<sup>92</sup>

Other Communist countries have exhibited a more diversified system of economy that embraces, apart from state sector, private sector, co-operative sector and joint sector. In countries like China and Poland the private sector is patted and pampered and in most of the Communist countries, private sector almost dominates in the field of handicrafts. As it has been observed in respect of Communist countries of Eastern Europe : "After mid-1953 and again since the fall of 1956, stressing of the 'positive role' of handicrafts and private enterprise has brought about a certain reanimation in the crafts lines and in the very small scale privately owned industries."<sup>93</sup>

In all the Communist countries, there has been added emphasis on co-operatives—industrial, crafts, agricultural and multi-purpose. Where the rank of the private sector has been depleted in the sphere of handicrafts and small and uneconomic farms, it has only inflated the sphere of co-operative sector. Besides, there is a marked tendency towards decentralisation and gradual increase of workers' control over industries and other economic enterprises as is evident from the position prevalent in Yugoslavia. In respect of Communist Eastern European countries as a whole it has been observed : "Since the completion of the first long-term plans, clear cut tendencies towards decentralisation have appeared in the area as a whole. Larger responsibilities at the district and provincial level and in some countries a reanimation of the 'Workers' Council' in the base works might in the long run bring the presently divergent types of organisation of industry existing in Yugoslavia

and in the Soviet bloc closer together.”<sup>94</sup>

To sum up, socialist transformation of countries in the Communist block has not proceeded in the direction of complete concentration of ownership and economic power in the hands of the state. The public enterprises and the social sector have assumed a multi-dimensional form and the introduction of workers’ control is an attempt to take the sting out of the bureaucratised and authoritarian system of state ownership. Hence a move is already afoot to initiate a deviation from the theory of identification of state ownership with social or public ownership. Social ownership or public ownership is no longer identified with wholesale and all-embracing state ownership.

*(iv) The British Socialist Tradition*

The British tradition of Democratic or Parliamentary socialism of the Labour Party, from the very beginning is averse to the policy of wholesale state ownership although state ownership or nationalisation of some key industries has become an important plank of Labour Party’s Economic Policy. C. R. Attlee, writing in 1937 about the Economic Policy of the Labour Party, said : “All the major industries will be owned and controlled by the community but there may well exist for long time many smaller enterprises which may be left to be carried on individually.”<sup>95</sup> In respect of the management of state owned industries Mr. Attlee was of opinion that “managers and technicians must be given reasonable freedom”, and “the workers must be citizens in industry and not wage slaves.”<sup>96</sup> Besides, Mr. Attlee was quite emphatic about avoidance of too much of centralisation, and was in favour of diffusion of industries instead of their concentration. As he said : “There is one great danger that must be avoided—over-centralisation . . . . . I conceive that under Socialism, there will be a wide regional decentralisation and a deliberate endeavour to allow for each area to express the individuality of the people.”<sup>97</sup>

After a quarter century, Mr. Harold Wilson, the Labour Party’s chief spokesman and the Leader of Her Majesty’s Opposition in the House of Commons writing on British Socialism and the economic and social objectives of the Labour Party, said in 1964 : “It (The Labour Party) is convinced that

these social and economic objectives can be achieved only through an expansion of common ownership substantial enough to give the community power over the commanding heights of the economy. Common ownership takes varying forms, including state-owned industries and firms, producers and consumers co-operation, municipal ownership and public participation in private concerns.”<sup>98</sup>

Thus the British concept of socialism is not a rigid framework that comprehends a system of all-embracing state ownership. Under such a framework private ownership may go side by side with public ownership provided the former subserves the socialist objective and does not degenerate into a vehicle of exploitation of the society. Besides, public ownership may assume the form of municipal ownership, co-operative ownership, and governmental partnership with private sector in joint enterprises. As Mr. Harold Wilson made it amply clear : “Again on the form of industrial organisation, we are not doctrinaire. In some cases private firms will be granted a licence on payment of a royalty : in other cases there will be joint participation between government and private enterprise, in others a majority Government or the creation of 100 percent publicly owned enterprises.”<sup>99</sup>

The Labour Party of Britain of course represents the mainstream of British socialist movement and its policy is the replica of the democratic socialist thought of the western world. However the Co-operative Party of Britain is equally deeply committed to a policy of social ownership that takes away state ownership from the centre of the stage. The Party is an advocate of municipal socialism and co-operative socialism.<sup>100</sup> It advocates diverse forms of social ownership. Even within a single industry there can be combination of government departments, local authorities, public corporations, co-operatives and federal association of local and co-operative organisations. A Government department may be given general powers of supervision, planning, information, research and encouragement of mutual assistance between the units in industry. It is felt : “A development of this kind would result in diversity without fragmentation, the preservation of initiative without anarchy, social ownership without an undue concentration of social power, and planning without bureaucracy.”<sup>101</sup>

The Socialist Union of Britain is of opinion that transfer of all economic powers to the state results not in a "society of the free and equal" individuals but in "totalitarian tyranny".<sup>103</sup> "It is an even sorer fate for the worker," the Socialist Union observes "to be at the mercy of the state than to be the victim of private capitalists, for the state—unlike the capitalists—is ubiquitous."<sup>103</sup> The Socialist Union has finally concluded : "A socialist economy is a mixed economy part-private, part-public, and mixed in all its respects. It comprises private spending as well as public spending, private ownership as well as public ownership, private enterprise as well as public enterprise."<sup>104</sup>

Thus the latest trend in some of the Communist countries and the latest rationalist, libertarian and non-Marxian brand of socialist thought are in favour of non-state form of socialism as far as possible. Besides the Syndicalists advocate complete elimination of the state and transfer of its power to the Syndicate of workers, and the Guild Socialists advocate transfer of economic power to the Producers' Guilds. Transfer to the workers of the right of ownership and management of the enterprise in which they serve, so as to make them the arbiter not only of their own destiny but also of the destiny of the national economy, has become a fashionable trend of the modern libertarian socialist thought. It is felt that the transfer of ownership and control to the workers lends true socialist character to the economy. As Oscar Lange has observed : "Increasing the role of the working class, transferring to it supervision over the production process and the control instituted by the new state—which issues from the loins of the working class—leads to true socialist elements."<sup>105</sup> As he has further observed : "Nationalisation of the means of production under socialism is related to the direct participation of the workers in management. That is the true index of the socialisation of the means of production."<sup>106</sup>

## **GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE**

Gandhi as a socialist, while convinced, that for the sake of socialist transformation, the economy must be socially owned or publicly owned, in conformity with the latest rationalist and

libertarian socialist trend, did not subscribe to the view that the state shall play the principal role in the drama of socialist reconstruction of the society. Instead, in the realm of socialist reconstruction of the economy he wanted to circumscribe the sphere of state action as far as possible and extend the domain of non-state activities as much as desirable.

Like any other genuine socialist, Gandhi desired that every individual irrespective of his parentage, caste or sex, shall be assured the absolute minimum in a socialist society. As he said : "No one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing."<sup>107</sup> "These should be freely available to all," said Gandhi "as God's air and water are or ought to be."<sup>108</sup> But Gandhi a believer in the philosophy of Bread Labour—that all must earn their bread by the sweat of their brow—was not prepared to advocate free distribution of doles, to each individual. By the very nature of things, Bread Labour implies guarantee of employment to every body that will entitle each to earn his bread. Hence while advocating that none should suffer from want of food and clothing he said : "In other words every body should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet."<sup>109</sup>

But in order to provide employment to each citizen so that his absolute minimum is ensured the economic system needed reorganisation and socialistic reorientation. If the objective is an egalitarian society, the economic forces can no longer be left at the mercy of the private sector, whose primary consideration is profit. The national economy can not be left to the gamble of the exploiters, the bourgeoisie and the privileged classes, who will determine the nature, quantity and quality of production, the rate of wage, the margin of profit, the manner and method of distribution, the employment and price policy etc. Thus the mechanism of production and machinery of distribution can not be entrusted to the free play of laissez fairism and thus made the instruments of exploitation. Speaking about ownership of these means of production, Gandhi said : "They should not be made the vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolisation by any country, nation or group of persons, would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the

world too.”<sup>110</sup>

Thus according to Gandhi in order to ensure the emergence of an egalitarian society that shall assure work to each, so that each is in a position to earn his absolute minimum, the economy must be brought under social ownership and control. Hence he said : “This ideal (ensuring work to each so that the means of livelihood is earned by all) can be universally utilised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses.”<sup>111</sup> As Gandhi said further, the means of production can be utilised for universal good if there is “Universal ownership of the instruments of production”.<sup>112</sup>

Gandhi was therefore convinced like any other genuine socialist that in order to ensure the emergence of an egalitarian society, the means of production, distribution and exchange, should be socially owned and controlled or that there should be “universal”, “public”, “social” or “communal” ownership. But unlike Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Gandhi was not prepared to entrust the economic destiny of the nation to the state and make it the supreme architect of socialist reconstruction. On the other hand he felt that the ultimate objective of socialism and an egalitarian society shall be defeated if economic powers are concentrated in the hands of the state. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : “I do not share, the socialist belief that centralisation of the necessities of life will conduce to the commonwelfare when the centralised industries are planned and owned by the state.”<sup>113</sup>

That Gandhi rejected the very notion of assigning a predominant place to the state in the matter of socialist reconstruction is borne out by a multiplicity of considerations. At the root of it stands, apart from his philosophy regarding the nature of the state, his understanding of the intimate relationship between the objective situation prevalent in a country that launches upon the policy of socialist transformation and particularly the objective situation that ensues as a result of non-violent revolution, the compulsion of backward economy at the threshold of socialist transformation and the role of the state, and above all the ultimate objective of socialism and the capacity of the state to further such objective.

**(a) Gandhi's Idea of State**

Gandhi from the very beginning was suspicious of the role of the all-pervasive, all-powerful and absolute state. The very idea of state was an anathema to him. Although a deeply religious man considering in the light of the Bhagavad Gita the entire universe as the manifestation of the Spirit, unlike Hegel, he was not prepared to accept the state as the manifestation of such Spirit. The state for Gandhi was not the "Supreme or the Super Ego", the "Absolute Mind" the embodiment of 'Universal Spirit' or the "Reason". He considered it almost intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy to consider the state as the "Divine Idea" in full bloom or the "March of God on Earth". As a romanticist who reposed his faith in man, deification or glorification of the state was foreign to his grain.

Like Marx and the Marxists, Gandhi viewed the state as an instrument of violence and an apparatus of oppression. Violence is ingrained in its nature and forms the very life-blood of the state. As Gandhi wrote : "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organised form."<sup>114</sup>

According to Gandhi, the state has its origin in violence and is maintained and sustained by violence. The social violence committed by the individuals, their greed, selfishness and animosity towards fellow beings, and their propensity to commit violence to the person, property and status of their neighbour, or fellow beings, is at the root of the state. The state is meant to limit and restrict social violence committed by individuals. But the most significant aspect of the state is that it tries to limit and restrict violence committed by individuals by employing instruments of violence and force. The violence of the individual is prevented and contained by superior violence of the state.

Thus the state according to Gandhi is a manifestation not of the "Absolute Mind" or "Divine Will" but of violence. Besides, force forms the very cornerstone of the state. Gandhi's suspicion of the state partly stemmed from the fact that apart from violence, the state relies too much on the use of force which is of course an aspect of violence. Hence he said : "What I disapprove of is an organisation based on force which a state is."<sup>115</sup> Thus the Gandhian concept of the state resembles the concept of state of Bakunin, the founder of modern

Anarchist thought who said : "The State is not society, it is only an historical form of it as brutal as it is abstract. It was born historically in all countries of the marriage of violence rapine, pillage, in a word war and conquest. It has been from its origin and it remains still at present the divine sanction of brutal force, and triumphant inequality."<sup>116</sup>

Gandhi who was of the opinion that the state is born of force and violence and sustained and nourished by them, was convinced that force and violence form inalienable aspects of the nature of the state. It is a day-dream to expect that the state will ever shed its posture of violence and force. The state can not rise above its inherent nature of violence as much as a leopard can not change its spot in any circumstance. Gandhi of course subscribed to the view that no individual however depraved he may be, is beyond redemption and that man's selfish and acquisitive instinct and anti-social tendencies may be curbed under humane treatment.<sup>117</sup> But at the same time he felt that that is not true of the state. Hence like Bakunin he said : "The individual has a soul but as the state is a soulless machine it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence."<sup>118</sup> Since the state represented violence in a concentrated and organised form from which it can not be weaned away under any circumstance, Gandhi said : "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear."<sup>119</sup>

Hence Gandhi's ideal state of human society is a state of statelessness or as Gandhi said "a state of enlightened anarchy".<sup>120</sup> In such a "state of enlightened anarchy" the state is conspicuous by its absence and political power enjoyed by it simply vanishes into thin air. As he writes : "In the ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no state."<sup>121</sup>

But Gandhi as much a sober realist as a soaring idealist realised that the ideal of state-less society often eludes our grasp because such a state of affair is contingent on the attainment of perfection by individuals so that their conduct becomes self-regulating, and since attainment of such a state of perfection by individuals is fairly difficult, he thought of a second best or a predominantly non-violent state. But the second best or



the predominantly non-violent state of Gandhi is one where the political authority performs minimum of functions and exercises minimum of control over the economy and the individual. As Gandhi said: "But the ideal (the state of statelessness) is never fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that, that Government is best which governs the least."<sup>122</sup> Writing in the *Harijan* about a decade later, Gandhi also gave expression to the same sentiment. "That state will be the best," said Gandhi "which is governed the least."<sup>123</sup>

Because of this suspicion of the nature of the state Gandhi also became an advocate of the decentralised system of political organisation with self-sufficient and self-governing village republics forming the nucleus of his social and political system. The state therefore is dethroned from the pedestal of power and predominance in his scheme of things.

Gandhi's suspicion of the nature of the state and its violent and coercive character is reflected in his attitude towards the state as an agent of socialist transformation. Although like any other socialist he wanted to restrict and limit the monopolistic control over the economy and exploitation of the national economy for private or sectional gains by the transfer of ownership and control of the economy to the society or the community, he was far from being an enthusiastic defender of expansion of the domain of state power and its extension to the economic domain.

If like Marx and the Marxists, Gandhi started with a critical look on the nature and role of the state, he went beyond them, in respect of the role it should play in the matter of socialist reconstruction. In this respect Gandhi was more consistent than Marx and the Marxists. If the state is grounded on violence, violence forms its life-blood, and it is an instrument of violence, it will continue to be so in all circumstances. Mere transfer of state machine from one class of people to another shall not transform its fundamental character. The state that stems from violence and represents violence in a concentrated and organised form can not be expected to change its inherent nature under the cover of proletarian dictatorship or control of political power by the workers and peasants.

Bakunin the founder of modern Anarchist school of thought has written : "The State is authority, it is force, it is the ostentation and infatuation of force, it does not insinuate itself, it does not seek to convert . . . Even when it commands what is good, it hinders and spoils it just because it commands it, and because every command provokes and excites the legitimate revolts of liberty, and because the good from the moment that it is commanded becomes evil from the point of view of true morality, of human morality, (doubtless not of divine) from the point of view of human respect and liberty."<sup>124</sup> Gandhi the philosophical anarchist, in repudiating the Marxian contention and in line with the anarchist thought of Bakunin also believed that the state, an instrument of violence and coercion, can not by the very nature of things create a society free from violence. An apostle of non-violence, who forged an indissoluble bond between end and means, for whom the means is as important as the end, for whom the end assumes the nature and texture of the means adopted for the attainment of the same and who subscribed to the view that ignoble means can not succeed in attaining a noble objective he was of opinion that state, an institution based on force and violence, can not rid the society of violence and exploitation perpetrated by an acquisitive, pre-socialist society. Accordingly he wrote : "It is my firm conviction that if the state suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time."<sup>125</sup>

Gandhi had in mind the developments in Soviet Union where the state power had been captured by the Proletariat by violence and the Proletariat after seizure of state power had perpetrated a reign of terror, a system of Dictatorship of the Proletariat, that was as much oppressive and tyrannical as any other form of dictatorship. The mere transfer of political power and authority of the state into the hands of the Proletariat had not changed the nature of the state. The state remained as aggressive and oppressive and as totalitarian and an emblem of violence, as the Tsarist regime it had replaced. Hence Gandhi said : "Some say there is [ruthlessness in Russia, but that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for the reason. For me it has very little good in it. Someday

this ruthlessness will create an anarchy worse than we have ever seen.”<sup>126</sup>

**(b) Non-Violent Revolution and the Role of the State**

The relatively less importance that Gandhi attached to the state as an instrument of socialist transformation can also be explained by the fact, that the objective situation that is expected to prevail after the peaceful Gandhian social revolution leading to the establishment of an egalitarian society does not warrant such strengthening of the apparatus of the state. Unlike Marx or Engels, Lenin or Stalin, Gandhi had neither the opportunity to witness the implementation of his socialist strategy nor the good luck to act as the master strategist during the period of socialist reconstruction. Just the day before his assassination Gandhi wrote : “India has still to attain, social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns.”<sup>127</sup> Yet the hypothetical objective condition that shall emerge as a result of the Gandhian non-violent social revolution makes too much reliance on the state, as an instrument of socialist transformation, redundant.

The extent of reliance on the state, in the Soviet Union, as the apparatus of socialist transformation, and consequently the galloping speed with which state ownership progressed, were precipitated by the historical forces that were unleashed as a result of a violent revolution. The violence of the revolutionaries and the coercion perpetrated by the Bolshevik regime against the bourgeoisie, whipped up counter-revolution, civil war, foreign intervention, and sabotage by the national bourgeoisie. To crush and liquidate the counter-revolutionary and anti-socialist forces both indigenous and foreign that posed grave threat to the building up of a socialist system, the socialist strategists of Soviet Union had to strengthen the engine of state power. But Gandhi's emphasis on non-violent technique for the attainment of social-revolution takes the thunder away from the need for tightening the grip of the state over the socialist economy.

As Gandhi said : “I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence by converting the people to my point of

view, by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred.”<sup>128</sup> He had profound faith in the sense of equity, compassion and fair-play of each individual and believed that approached in appropriate manner the privileged section of the society, the capitalists and the moneyed men, may be made to renounce their privilege, in favour of the underprivileged, voluntarily bring themselves down to the level of the poorest of the poor and thereby facilitate the emergence of an egalitarian society. Accordingly he said : “Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about, through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes, in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life.”<sup>129</sup> Gandhi’s socialism thus rests upon the firm belief that conversion of the privileged people into trustees of the society is a practicable ideal.

If the approach to the problem of reconstruction of society in the direction of an egalitarian order is one of non-violence, persuasion and spiritual transformation of the privileged people through moral appeal, it cuts the very root of counter-revolution, civil war, sabotage or any foreign intervention that leads to progressively greater and greater reliance on the state as the apparatus of socialist reconstruction. Thus the objective condition associated with Gandhian technique of socialist revolution makes the state as the chief apparatus of socialist transformation redundant.

### **(c) Compulsion of Underdeveloped Economy**

The Soviet model of socialist transformation immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution and preceding the civil war, foreign intervention, and sabotage by the capitalists, and the Chinese model of development of socialist economy, demonstrate that the socialist strategists who desire to embark upon socialist transformation in the context of economically backward or less-developed countries, shall have to take into account certain objective conditions and tendencies that are

peculiar to the countries in question. Of these conditions and tendencies the most outstanding one that the socialist strategists encounter is the problem of development of the economy through the utilisation of the natural and human resources of the nation so that an egalitarian society of affluence shall be generated. In Soviet Union immediately after the Revolution the capitalists and *petit bourgeoisie* were not liquidated; rather within the framework of what Lenin dubbed as "State Capitalism" and what his critics branded as "Coalition with the bourgeoisie" the bourgeoisie and the kulaks were allowed to play their role in increasing the national wealth. In China the pattern, what Lenin termed as "Buy off the bourgeoisie", was adopted to develop the economy on socialist lines. Hence as Oscar Lange has observed : "It can, however be stated in general, that the working class-peasant alliance, and often the more extended alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, and even with certain sections of the bourgeoisie appears every where, in all countries, in the struggle for power and in the period of struggle to maintain power."<sup>130</sup> Gandhi equally felt that the objective conditions prevalent in an underdeveloped country like India with the compulsion of backward economy to lift itself out of thralldom, demanded a strategy of socialist development different from the strategy prescribed by Marx or Engels or adopted in countries with sound industrial and economic base. Even Marx and Engels while advocating centralisation of all instruments of production, distribution and exchange in the hands of the state said, "These measures will of course be different in different countries."<sup>131</sup> They further observed in their Preface to the German edition of 1872 of the Manifesto of the Communist Party : "The practical application of the principles will depend . . . every where and at all times on the historical conditions for the time being existing."<sup>132</sup>

The foremost need of India in the context of her poverty and underdevelopment, realised Gandhi, was production, and production demanded capital, industrial and commercial knack, organising ability and enterprise, managerial ability and employment of technical man-power. To take capital first, as Mr. Ashoka Mehta has observed : "Being an underdeveloped country accumulation of capital in India will not be painless.

**We shall have to depend on our immense human resources.”** In face of scarcity of capital, Gandhi desired to depend upon the huge human resources lying idle in the country. He wanted to convert the idle man-power into capital. The idle man-power may be made to inflate the quantum of national capital either through the “Siberian Process” of forced labour, labour camps, and compulsion used by the dictatorial regime wielding enormous power in the name of the working class, or through democratic process where men are persuaded to sacrifice in terms of blood, sweat, and tears for the cause of an egalitarian society of affluence. Gandhi chose the latter method because he realised that it is not only more productive than the other method in terms of capital needed for socialist construction but also in terms of socialist values. Under any form of regimentation, where spontaneity is absent and initiative is lacking, the rate of capital formation may be niggardly that shall sabotage the objective of socialist construction. Besides a system of regimentation will sap the ultimate socialist values like freedom, fraternity, fellowship and freedevlopment or full blossoming of all individuals.

Gandhi also tried to take advantage of the initiative, energy, enterprise, and drive of the capitalists and the privileged who usually grasp better than ordinary mortals the art and science of managing economic enterprises and make them productive and profitable ventures. He, had no doubt, that all men are not capable of mastering the art of minting wealth and if at the initial stage of socialist construction, the economy suffers from lack of initiative, enterprise, managerial ability and entrepreneurial knack, the progress towards a socialist economy of affluence may be halted or impeded. He therefore realised that the objective necessity of an underdeveloped economy at the threshold of socialist transformation does not warrant complete state take-over of the economy and liquidation of the private sector. The shortage of entrepreneurial ability in the state sector may paralyse the economy and lead to stagnation of socialist progress. Hence his cautious policy led him not to kill the goose that lays golden eggs but to domesticate it and utilise its services for the cause of socialist reconstruction. That led Gandhi to rely less on state ownership.

The extent of state ownership in countries like Czechoslovakia or Poland was facilitated by state take-over of ex-enemy assets. These countries were already sufficiently industrially developed before they embarked upon the policy of socialist transformation. Ready-made capital assets were available whose transfer to state ownership did not cause much dislocation in the system of production. But Gandhi had to grapple with the economy of a backward country, where industrial capital assets were yet to be created. There was not much of industrial, commercial or financial assets to be taken over by the state. Further, extension of state ownership over the very little that had already been created may have sagging effect on the initiative and enterprise of the private sector of the economy in general. Accordingly in the objective situation prevalent in India that Gandhi took into account in framing his socialist strategy, state ownership but occupied a secondary place.

**(d) Balanced Development of Man and State Ownership**

Gandhi's primary consideration in subscribing to the Philosophy of Socialism was his love for man, his commitment to Sarvodaya or all-welfare of all individuals, i.e. their balanced development, and elevation of their moral, spiritual, mental and intellectual stature along with improvement of their economic status. The individual occupied the central position in his scheme of things and the economic and political system that he comprehended revolved round the individual. As Gandhi wrote : "The individual is the one supreme consideration."<sup>133</sup> Since blossoming of all the graces of his life<sup>134</sup> was Gandhi's primary concern and socialism facilitates blossoming of such graces and symbolises human values like freedom, equality, fraternity and fellowship, Gandhi was attracted towards this socialist ideal.

In Gandhi's eyes mere material affluence was not enough. He was so much concerned with Sarvodaya or all-round welfare or the development of an integrated personality of the individual that he said, "The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full, mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous, with spiritual."<sup>135</sup> As he said in another connection, "Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore

sinful.”<sup>136</sup> Any economic, political, or social system must conform to this norm of balanced development of each individual, in order to be acceptable to Gandhi. As it has been observed : “Gandhi’s assessment of the worth of an economic system was clearly based upon its effect upon the development of the individual. It was always from the humanistic standpoint that he examined any contrivance, whether it was technological or social.”<sup>137</sup>

Gandhi’s opposition to large-scale and indiscriminate mechanisation can be rightly attributed not to his revivalism, reaction and obscurantism, but to his deep concern for man, his freedom, and balanced growth. He was not opposed to all machinery. As he said : “How could that be possible ? I know that my own body is nothing but an extraordinary delicately constructed machinery. The spinning wheel is also a machine and so also every tooth prick.”<sup>138</sup> Not only he was not opposed to all machines; he even commended machines like Singer’s sewing machine for use by villagers. What he objected to is man’s subordination to machine and decline in his mental and moral stature. In this age of automations man has become a slave of machines, a machine tender, and Gandhi’s primary concern was how to liberate man from such degeneration and state of slavery. Hence he said : “I am not against machinery as such but I am totally opposed to it when it masters us.”<sup>139</sup>

Too much of reliance on machine and one’s subservience to it according to Gandhi are not conducive to the development of one’s integrated personality. Man’s sense of originality, creativity and mental and intellectual alertness are thereby, cramped. He is reduced thereby only to a fraction of his real self. As Gandhi said : “The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man.”<sup>140</sup>

Machinery not only subordinate man and deprive him of his sense of originality and creativity; it also furnish means of exploitation of many. Many are deprived of their freedom by a few with the help of the machine. Gandhi whose ideal society encompasses all-round welfare of all the individuals was frightened at this deprivation of many, of their basic human



freedoms. Accordingly he said : "Today machinery helps a few to ride on the back of millions."<sup>141</sup> It is against this lack of freedom of the millions under a comprehensive scheme of industrialisation and mechanisation and their consequent enslavement and lack of human dignity that Gandhi raised his banner of revolt. "In modern times" said Gandhi "it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society."<sup>142</sup> That Gandhi adopted a very cautious policy in respect of mechanisation and industrialisation is thus explained by the fact that his concern for man's individuality, creativity and freedom was of paramount importance for him. As Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose has very appropriately observed : "If however, machinery can be utilised without loss of freedom, Gandhiji was quite prepared to welcome it. It is freedom, which is the highest value, and this has to be preserved even at the cost of technological inefficiency, if that becomes unavoidable."<sup>143</sup>

If Gandhi was opposed to unrestrained mechanisation in the name of individuality, and dignity and freedom of the individual, he was more opposed to it because of its potentiality for centralisation and concentration of economic power through which it deprives individuals of their individuality. Even if machinery were capable of supplying all the basic needs of each individual Gandhi took exception to their proliferation on the ground of its propensity to create tendency towards centralisation. Accordingly he said : "Granting for the moment that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity still it would concentrate production in particular areas."<sup>144</sup> Mechanisation and industrialisation deprive the individual of his individuality and freedom through the concentration of economic power and centralised control. Individual becomes a slave of the machine, a machine tender, because improved machines, by their very nature are centrally owned and managed. Machines become the instrument of exploitation in the hands of the few because by their very nature they promote centralisation. Hence Gandhi said : "I am personally opposed to great trusts and concentration of industries by means of elaborate machinery."<sup>145</sup>

Gandhi's plea for Khadi and Village Industries can be

partly explained by the fact that it goes against the very spirit of centralisation which stands at the very root of exploitation of man, their individuality and freedom. "Centralisation as a system" said Gandhi "is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society."<sup>146</sup> It is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of the society because centralisation according to Gandhi perpetrates exploitation of man not only materially but also intellectually and spiritually and as exploitation is treated by him as a type of violence, centralisation of economy is against the very spirit of non-violence. Speaking about Khadi and Village Industries and a decentralised system of economy he said: "Rural economy as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence."<sup>147</sup>

Thus to end human exploitation, to liberate the individual from a new type of slavery, to ensure enjoyment of freedom by them and to pave the way for the blossoming of the real socialist values like freedom, fraternity and fellowship, Gandhi advocated a decentralised system of economy. "A decentralised economic system" as Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose has observed, "is an integral part of his revolutionary ideal through which, Gandhi hoped that mankind would be ushered into a new order of creative freedom."<sup>148</sup>

If Gandhi was apprehensive that too much of mechanisation, industrialisation and centralisation will compromise human and socialist values like freedom, fraternity and fellowship, he was still more apprehensive of the loss of these values when there is fusion of economic and political power or economic power is centralised in the hands of the state. Himself aware of the violent character of the state and the basis of force on which it stands he looked with suspicion at every increase in the power of the state. As he gave expression to his apprehension: "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm, to mankind, by destroying individuality which lies at the root of progress."<sup>149</sup> But if political power and economic power are combined and concentrated in the hands of the state, it may spell the very doom of individuality and all values that are cherished by

socialism.

Gandhi felt that "political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life."<sup>150</sup> But bettering the condition of the individuals in every department of life and ennobling their personality will become a mirage according to him, if economic power is combined with unrestrained political power. Socialist values will suffer terrible casualty if such fusion is effected. Accordingly he said : "If you have only state production, men will become moral and intellectual paupers."<sup>151</sup> Hence instead of advocating acquisition of absolute power by the state in the sphere of economic reorganisation, Gandhi advocated limitation of the authority of state in this sphere.

In the context of Swaraj Gandhi said : "Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when they are abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."<sup>152</sup> Thus Gandhi's emphasis was more on controlling rather than enhancing the authority of the state. The state shall be restrained not only in the exercise of its political power but also its economic power. Hence Gandhi said : "I suggest that, if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralise many things."<sup>153</sup> The ideal state of human society that Gandhi comprehended is therefore a decentralised system of self-sufficient village republics at the centre of which stands the individual always ready to perish for the humanity at large.

If Gandhi was suspicious of the nature and the role of the state he restrained himself from investing it with highest dignity and status in his scheme of socialist engineering. His passion for social ownership or community ownership, for terminating the exploitation of man by man associated with a laissez-faire economy so as to pave the way for the emergence of an egalitarian society can not be doubted. Like the Utopian and the Scientific Socialists he considered social ownership as indispensable. But unlike the Marxist he did not commit the error of identifying social ownership with all-enveloping state ownership.

What was uppermost in Gandhi's mind is that in order to make the socialist economy a real replica of community's interests and mirror true socialist values, the society as a whole must be got deeply involved in the process of production and distribution, and management and control of the economy. The socialist economy should be so organised that the workers—the real producers would have effective control over the means of production and determination of the processes of distribution and exchange. Hence in conformity with the thought-process of the modern rationalist and libertarian socialist thinkers of this age and the latest variety of democratic socialist theories and the latest modifications in the practices in some of the communist countries, Gandhi has advocated a diversified system of socialist economy that embraces apart from state ownership, different varieties of non-state ownership.

The question naturally arises, if Gandhi wanted to restrain the state and circumscribe the scope of its activities in the realm of socialist reconstruction by devising a diversified type of socialist economy, what exactly constitutes the scope of the activities of the state? Where does the state stand in his scheme of things and what part does it exactly play in the matter of socialist reconstruction? In order to grasp the essence of Gandhi's attitude in this respect it is necessary to have a comprehensive view of the picture of Gandhi's socialist structure.

### NATURE OF THE GANDHIAN SOCIALIST ECONOMY

Gandhi, who was suspicious of the powers of the state, critical of its reliance on force and violence, and apprehensive of the blossoming of human personality under a system of centralisation and bureaucratisation associated with too much of reliance on the state in economic matters, wanted a system of social ownership where the state shall occupy a subordinate position, and the Community as a whole shall be got deeply involved in the productive process. Instead of a dominant state sector Gandhian socialism therefore comprehends a dominant non-state sector or People's Sector and a subordinate State Sector meant to supplement and compliment the non-state

sector. Under the non-state sector, the Village Sector will be primarily concerned with reconstruction of socialist society. The state sector that shall consist only of the heavy industry, and public utility services shall "occupy the least part of the vast national activity which will mainly be in the village."<sup>154</sup> Thus whereas according to Marx and the Marxists, the state—although the proletarian state plays the most active role and occupies a dominant position in the matter of socialist reconstruction, the Gandhian state declines in respect of its powers and functions from the commencement of the act of socialist transformation. As Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose has very appropriately observed : "The chief difference between Marxian Socialism and Gandhi's anarchistic ideal lies in the fact that in the latter, the withering away of the state begins, from the immediate present instead of being postponed, till a period when all possible opposition, has already been liquidated by means of intense centralisation of social authority brought about by violence "<sup>155</sup>

#### **(a) The Non-State Sector**

Marx and Engels cherished "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."<sup>156</sup> But due to concentration of economic powers in the hands of the state and operation of the means of production, distribution and exchange through centralised bureaucratised and totalitarian state system established after the Proletarian Revolution neither "free development of each" nor "free development of all" has been realised in Soviet Union, that is attempting to model its socio-economic system on Marxian lines. But Gandhi who wanted to make socialism safe for each individual so that, it is made safe for all, laid greater emphasis on non-state sector of the economy over the State Sector. The non-state sector of Gandhi is a two-tier system consisting of the village sector, that includes both private sector and cooperative sector and the trusteeship sector. But at the root of the non-state sector stands the village sector that forms the bed-rock of the system.

##### **(i) The Village Sector**

To make socialism safe for the individual and to garner it

to the high ideals of freedom, fraternity and fellowship, Gandhi wanted a decentralised system of socialist economy. Oscar Lange is of the opinion that the socialist enterprises must satisfy two conditions. "It must act as trustee of the general social interest, and it must be a self-governing body."<sup>157</sup> But in the state-owned enterprises neither the enterprise safeguards "general social interest" nor does it act as a "self-governing body". Neither as producers nor as consumers, the society is taken care of. The bureaucracy dominates the economic system; it governs the enterprises and safeguards its own interest. Milovan Djilas has observed that under the socialist system in the communist world "the labour force taken as a whole is a factor in total social production. The new ruling class, with its material and political monopoly, uses this factor, almost to the same extent, that it does other national goods and elements of production, and treats it the same way, disregarding the human factor."<sup>158</sup>

Apart from the social interest, and workers' control that are sacrificed under the centralised state sector, the system of egalitarianism that forms the very essence of socialism and from which fraternity and fellowship follow as natural corollaries also suffer casualty. Production in centralised state enterprises under bureaucratic control does not itself help equitable distribution. The managerial class, the technocrats, and the industrial bureaucrats running and managing the state enterprises, by virtue of their higher wages and privileges, constitute a class by themselves and the wealth of the nation only slowly and inequitably percolates down to the bottom. J. C. Kumarappa who in his appreciation for the Soviet system observed that the Soviet Government has succeeded remarkably in levelling down class differences between the leaders and the people, also observed that the range of income in Soviet Union was between "6,000 roubles for artists, scientists, and intellectuals and 600 roubles for unskilled workers on the average. However cultural workers like writers, painters, scientists are paid more handsomely and the top pay of some 20,000 roubles is drawn by the Soviet President of the Academy of Sciences."<sup>159</sup>

Gandhi's Village Sector consisting of a workshop in each

home and a co-operative society in every village will meet the triple problems of ensuring societal interests, workers' control and equitable distribution that are the essential requirements of a socialist system. As Wilfred Wellock has observed : "Human personality can not develop without responsibility and creative self-expression and for these things there is little or no scope for the great majority in probably 80 to 90 percent of mass production industry."<sup>160</sup> Through the system of Village Sector where ownership is rightly diffused and creatively dispersed among real producers, opportunity for creative self-expression is provided, workers' control is automatically ensured, societal interest is systematically safeguarded and equitable distribution is adequately facilitated. Hence as Wilfred Wellock has further observed : "From the first Gandhiji had the deep conviction that India should concentrate on developing industry in her 700,000 villages in the interest of economic security, maximum personal freedom, the establishment of a stable peaceful civilisation and general contentment."<sup>161</sup>

#### *Scope of the Village Sector*

The Gandhian concept of Village Sector is a considerably vast sector that as a matter of fact occupies the "commanding height" of the Gandhian socialist economy. The Village Sector will produce either through owner workers or co-operative enterprises all the essential requirements or the "daily needs" of the villages.<sup>162</sup> The villages will produce their own food, clothing and other articles needed for meeting their basic needs and thus they must be self-sufficient in this respect. Besides they will also produce "a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities."<sup>163</sup> The villages will not only produce farm products; the processing of such products will also be undertaken by the villages themselves. Crushing of wheat, pounding of rice, manufacture of textiles, paper, ink, pen, etc. should also be undertaken by the villages.<sup>164</sup> The villages will also produce their dairy products, fruits, and vegetables.<sup>165</sup> In his Constructive Programme, Gandhi has written : "Village economy can not be complete without the essential village industries, such as hand grinding, soap-making, paper-

making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing, etc.”<sup>166</sup> Subsequently Gandhi added to the list talgud, honey, toys, mats etc.<sup>167</sup>

Thus the entire consumers goods sector of the economy of the country will be left to be taken care of by the Village Sector, the town having been converted into the clearing house for surplus products of the villages. Gandhi was of opinion, “There is hardly anything of daily use in the home which the villagers have not made before and cannot make even now.”<sup>168</sup> As Gandhi wrote later : “There will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the village. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden. . . . .”<sup>169</sup>

The Village Sector occupies a place of such prime importance in the socialist economy of Gandhian conception that Gandhi would not permit production of any commodity that can conveniently be produced in villages to be produced on a large scale and in centralised industries in cities. Hence he said, “In any case, under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products.”<sup>170</sup> He further felt that even if some articles are not produced and supplied by the villages, the feasibility of their production and supply by the villages should be explored.<sup>171</sup> A friend of Gandhi listed a number of articles besides and beyond what Gandhi recommended for production in the villages. They included articles like pottery, glasswares, agricultural implements, phenyl, candles, mirrors, play-things etc., and Gandhi suggested that the list deserved careful consideration.<sup>172</sup> Gandhi of course conceded that key industries, may be centralised and state-owned. “But then I would not choose anything as a key industry, that can be taken up by the villages with a little organising.”<sup>173</sup>

In the Village Sector, although different types of activities associated with production of articles of daily use are to be undertaken, yet Khadi production and all the allied and ancillary activities connected with it are given a place of primary importance. Gandhi not only considered Khadi as the livery and a badge of freedom from foreign domination, he also



considered it as the livery of freedom of millions from their economic subjugation and exploitation. "Khadi" for Gandhi "is the chief village handicraft."<sup>174</sup> As Gandhi wrote: "I have often said that Khadi is the central sun round which the other village industries revolve like planets."<sup>175</sup> Thus for Gandhi, Khadi was the "sun of the village solar system" and the "sun of the whole industrial solar system" from which the various, village industries would derive their heat and sustenance. But Khadi production involved various other processes and engagements that Gandhi wanted to include in the village sector. For example production of Khadi includes cotton growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing warp and the woof weaving and washing. Accordingly all the processes should form parts of the Village Sector of the Gandhin socialist economy.

Although Gandhi was opposed to centralised industries and mass production in giant factories, he was not opposed to modern inventions, that can lighten the burden of workers, working in the villages. As such he was not opposed to application of electricity in village industries. But the generation and distribution of electricity should be the responsibility of the village authority. Hence he said: "If we could have electricity in every village home I should not mind, villagers plying their implements and tools, with the help of electricity. But then the village communities . . . would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pasture."<sup>176</sup> Thus not only the consumers' goods sector will form the exclusive preserve of the village sector; villages will also remain in over-all charge of generation and distribution of power in the villages.

#### *Organisation of the Village Sector*

Regarding organisation of production of the Village Sector, Gandhi has his clear-cut idea. Writing in *Young India*, Gandhi had said: "These villages can not retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial if they do not control the production of the prime necessities of life."<sup>177</sup> But the villages can control the productive system either through organising production on the basis of owner-worker, working in his own cottage, or on co-operative basis; yet Gandhi had preference

for a system of "the villagers working in their cottages, as may have done from times immemorial."<sup>178</sup>

Under the system of owner-worker working in their cottages the craftsmen will themselves be the owners of their tools and workshops and will control the various processes of production and distribution, wage policy and the rate of profit. They will be the masters of their own industrial world and the masters of their own destiny. As G. Rama Chandran has observed : "He was . . . firm in his conviction that all decentralised and small-scale industries in rural areas can and should be run in such manner that the producers themselves own the tools of production."<sup>179</sup> This system of handicraft production will ensure maximum freedom for the producers since the producers will themselves directly control every process of production in every stage of production. But Gandhi who regarded the individual as a socially conscious individual, did not rule out co-operatives of craft producers. Craftsmen may voluntarily co-operate among themselves for the procurement of raw materials or for the disposal of their finished products. Even if production may be done in the cottages of the producers, they may work under the direction of a common objective and common programme and pool the finished products together that becomes their common property to be distributed as per the societal or village needs. Hence to counter the contention of his critics Gandhi said : "A critic objects that the ancient plan (villagers working in their own cottages) is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers in their cottages they can be pooled together and profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw materials may be supplied from common stock."<sup>180</sup>

Thus, as with individual owner-worker system of craft production, Gandhi also pinned his faith on co-operative effort in the sphere of production in the village sector. His ideal village comprehends co-operative effort for the promotion of all economic, social and cultural activities. Accordingly he said : "As far as possible every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis."<sup>181</sup>

Individual and communal progress according to Gandhi is inconceivable without co-operation. Co-operation by the very nature of it, pre-supposes freedom of the individual to co-operate. As Gandhi said : "There is sweetness in co-operation, there is no one weak or strong among those who co-operate. Each is equal to the other. There is no feeling of helplessness in dependency."<sup>182</sup> Co-operation achieves miracles and through co-operation, individual welfare becomes manifold. As Gandhi wrote : "Drops in separation could only fade away, drops in co-operation made the ocean which carried on its broad bosom grey-hounds."<sup>183</sup>

Gandhi believed that however much one may try to be self-sufficient—which one must—in everything, he can not afford to be completely oblivious of co-operation with others. "The world to-day is moving towards the ideal of collective or co-operative effort, in every department of life."<sup>184</sup> Besides even the production of Khadi presupposes co-operation with others. As he said : "A man, can not become self-sufficient even in respect of all the various operations from the growing of cotton to the spinning of the yarn."<sup>185</sup> He further said that the very act of spinning "is impossible without the willing and intelligent co-operation of millions of human beings." Although spinning makes man self-reliant in respect of his food and clothing, a spinner can not be completely self-reliant and shall have to rely on the co-operation of many others. For example the co-operation of ginners, carders, sliverers, weavers and above all the customers are essential for providing livelihood to the spinners. Hence he said : "If spinning makes one self reliant it also enables one to understand the necessity of inter-dependence almost at every step."<sup>186</sup> Gandhi further said : "A spinning centre therefore is a co-operative society whose members are ginners, carders, spinners, weavers and buyers all tied together by a common bond, mutual goodwill and service."<sup>187</sup>

Not only co-operatives shall be tried in the fields like Khadi production or spinning and weaving; these may be extended to cover other village crafts also, like oil-pressing, hand-made paper etc.<sup>188</sup> That apart Gandhi believed that co-operation should be tried at the village level in the field of agriculture,

and cattle farming. Although he believed that land should belong to the tiller, yet co-operative farming should form an essential part of the Village Sector. Hence Gandhi said : "I firmly believe . . . that we shall not derive the full benefits of agriculture, until we take the co-operative farming. Does it not stand to reason that it is far better for a hundred families in a village to cultivate their lands collectively and divide the income therefrom, than to divide the land any how into a hundred portions ?"<sup>189</sup>

In respect of the strategy to be followed for the creation of co-operative farms, Gandhi had a clear-cut plan. As an apostle of non-violence, he was opposed to the application of violence for bringing about co-operative farming. "Let it be remembered that co-operation should be based on strict non-violence. There was no such thing as success of violent co-operation."<sup>190</sup> He further said : "It would be a sad thing if India tries to build up the new society based on co-operation by means of violence. Good brought about by force destroys individuality."<sup>191</sup>

The co-operative farms therefore must be established through voluntary co-operation effected if necessary through persuasion and non-violent non-co-operation with non-co-operators. The proprietors or the land-owner should voluntarily pool their land, labour and capital and work on it co-operatively to form the co-operative farm. As Gandhi said : "My notion of co-operation was that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital tools etc. The owners would work in co-operation, and own capital tools, animals, seeds etc. in co-operation."<sup>192</sup>

Apart from agriculture, cattle farming in the village sector should be taken up on co-operative basis. His ideal village is one that has a "co-operative dairy" and "a common land for grazing its cattle".<sup>193</sup> According to Gandhi, co-operative or collective cattle farming will mitigate all the evils of the individual system of cattle farming. Under this scheme no individual will be allowed to keep cattle in his own house. There will be common grazing ground or "land for exercising of the animals", under the co-operative farm. It shall ensure veterinary treatment to

animals when they are ill and improve variety of bulls can be kept for the cows under the cooperative or collective farm. The problem of adulteration of milk and expensiveness of fodder shall be avoided under the co-operative farm system. Hence Gandhi said : "I myself had no hesitation in saying that she (cow) could never be saved by individual farming. Her salvation and with her that of the buffalo could only be brought about, by collective endeavour. It is quite impossible for an individual farmer to look after the welfare of his cattle, in his own home in a proper and scientific manner. Amongst other causes lack of collective effort has been a principal cause of the deterioration of the cow and hence of cattle in general."<sup>194</sup> Thus craftsmen co-operatives, co-operative farms and co-operative cattle farming, form essential ingredients of the Gandhian concept of Village Sector.

The Village Sector of Gandhi, apart from serving the societal interest by producing and supplying the consumers' goods through crafts and co-operatives, and facilitating workers' control over enterprises through decentralised, domestic and co-operative system of productions, will also secure equitable distribution. When ownership of productive system will be diffused, when the workers themselves will own the means of production, become the owners of the articles produced, and the sale proceeds thereof, the societal wealth shall be automatically distributed among the members of the society. Since the producers in the villages shall engage themselves in the socially necessary productive operations like crafts or agricultural, their income will be more or less equal, of course depending upon the efficiency and productivity of different producers. As the workers themselves shall be the owners of the productive system the possibility of exploitation or some one getting rich at the expense of others, will not arise and economic inequality will be almost eliminated. Diffusion of wealth, will go side by side with diffusion of ownership. Distribution will go simultaneously with production or equitable distribution will synchronise with production. As Gandhi said : "Distribution can be equalised when production is localised; in other words, when the distribution is simultaneous with productions."<sup>195</sup>

The Village Sector of production will therefore act as a great

equaliser, and better than the centralised system of state ownership, it will facilitate equitable distribution of societal wealth. Hence as Jayaprakash Narayan has very appropriately observed : "The decentralised pattern would overwhelmingly be of the owner-worker or co-operative type. Thus this sector would neither be bureaucracy-ridden nor exploitative. It will also be more egalitarian than the centralised sector, whether public or private."<sup>196</sup>

It may sometimes be argued by the critics of the Gandhian idea of decentralised Village Sector that the system attaches premium to petty commodity production which by the very nature of things, goes against the grain of socialist ownership. The system of private ownership is thereby perpetuated, which is the very negation of social ownership or public ownership or socialist economy. It is of course true that the objective situation of the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution, created by the civil war, foreign intervention, and economic crisis in the country precipitated, rubbing out of the board, the craft sector, but in countries like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Rumania inspite of the commanding height that the state sector occupies in the economy, the crafts have their place and inspite of the expanding grip of the co-operative sector, private sector has still a role to play in this field. In Poland inspite of the Communist regime and the break-neck speed with which state ownership proceeded, the crafts that covered the fields of consumers, goods like clothing, food-processing, wood working etc. had 87,882 workshops left with a total of 133,184 persons gainfully employed in the year 1954, and private sector occupied a significant place in this sphere of production.<sup>197</sup> The Fifth Congress of the Polish Communist Party in its resolution said : "Expropriation of the property of capitalists and landed estate owners as social means of production and as means of exploitation of the working masses, does not mean the expropriation of small commodity producers (thus not only of peasants but also of handicraftsmen, small merchants, small industrialists etc."<sup>198</sup>

The Five Year Plan of 1947 of Yugoslavia while considering erroneous the contention that handicrafts have no place in the socialist economy observed : "Not to neglect and

eliminate handicrafts but to incorporate them in our general economic plan, to give them assistance to organise them into producers co-operatives, that they may serve the general economic development of our country as usefully as possible—such is our policy regarding handicrafts and all should abide by it.”<sup>199</sup> The statistics of 1954 indicate that 377,360 artisans were employed in a total of 1,57,076 workshops in the country out of which about 242,000 workers and artisans were employed in 142,000 establishments in the private sector. The number of gainfully employed persons per unit was under 2.<sup>200</sup> In Hungary, another Communist country handicrafts claimed 94,158 independent artisans and 95,364 artisans in co-operatives. The “Elements of a Programmatic Declaration” adopted at the Eighth Congress of the Italian Communist Party in 1956 reads : “The building of a socialist society with a view to the structure of the Italian economy has to anticipate the defence and development of the handicrafts, as well as co-operation with small and medium production, which does not have a monopoly character. It is possible to find, in the socialist system, favourable conditions for their long term development before the transition to higher forms of production, but always on the basis of economic advantage and voluntariness.”<sup>201</sup>

Thus petty-commodity production or a system of handicrafts production is not inconsistent and irreconcilable with socialist transformation of economy. Defenders of the system find no inconsistency in the coexistence of socialist economy and handicraft system of production during the transitional period. As Oscar Lange has observed : “In conditions other than that prevailed in the U.S.S.R. the need for a rapid transformation of the petty commodity economy into a socialist one does not exist.”<sup>202</sup> On the other hand, Oscar Lange is of the opinion that since the Socialist State possesses decisive powers for directing and regulating the entire economy, and since the petty commodity production or the craft sector is not excluded therefrom the continuance of this sector does not pose any threat to the building of socialism. “Decisive to the economic development of the country” said Lange “is the great socialist sector, which is dominant in the national economy.”<sup>203</sup> Jerzy Rutkowski says equally convincingly : “The immediate expro-

priation of the small producers is not in the interests of the socialist revolution in underdeveloped countries.”<sup>204</sup> He has further argued in favour of their continuance : “The rapid growth of heavy industry leads to a situation where the socialised state, and co-operative consumers’ goods enterprises are not in a position to fully satisfy the peoples needs. Therefore exists a broad sphere of small production and services, which should give small producers and merchants plenty of rooms to show what they can do.”<sup>205</sup>

But Gandhian emphasis on the petty-commodity economy, or the crafts in the Village Sector of his socialist economy is not a stop-gap measure or a feature of the transitional phase. It does not occupy a subordinate position under the State Sector and remains at its mercy. Its sphere does not run the risk of being cramped. In the long run perspective, its future does not depend upon its harmlessness to the State Sector. As Jayaprakash Narayan has very appropriately observed the petty commodity production or the craft production “is not to be just a complement of the centralised one.”<sup>206</sup> It stands on its own merit as a permanent feature of the Gandhian scheme of socialism. As the most essential ingredient of Gandhian socialist economy it acts as a shield against centralisation, bureaucratisation and dehumanisation, and stands as a great defender of egalitarianism. As Dr. B. Kumarappa has rightly observed : “Villagism is nothing but Socialism—Socialism decentralised and freed from violence, for only thus it would seem that the socialist ideal of each for all and all for each can really be attained.”<sup>207</sup>

### *(ii) The Trusteeship Sector*

Gandhi’s socialist economy accepts the decentralised system of production carried out in the homes of the owner-workers or the craftsmen, or in co-operatives of the craftsmen, as the ideal system of production, that shall facilitate enjoyment of freedom, fraternity, and fellowship and pave the way to egalitarianism. But what about the privately owned centralised undertakings that are already in existence ? Would Gandhi advocate their abolition, and liquidation of their owners, and their acquisition by the State or their continuance in his scheme



of things with permission to exploit the society and the economy as they were accustomed to do in the past ?

Socialism and egalitarianism by the very nature of things imply elimination of exploitation, and hence the propertied class that is in the possession of enterprises and capital assets, can by no stretch of imagination be allowed to continue their exploitation in such a society. But Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence does not permit their liquidation either. Gandhi's pragmatism also prompted him to realise that wealth in the sense of ensuring absolute minimum and if possible a reasonably decent standard of living to each is essential for each society and earning of such wealth presupposes, initiative, enterprise and ability which are comparatively in short supply in every society. Men of such scarce qualities instead of being liquidated should be utilised for socialist reconstruction. Their elimination according to him is the very synonym of social impoverishment. He did not like to kill the goose that lays golden eggs but wanted to tame and tutor it so that it subserves the socialist objective. He was prepared to allow such men of initiative enterprise and knack to enhance the wealth of the nation and society. Hence Gandhi allowed the owners of large-scale centralised industries or other productive enterprises to continue as trustees of the socialist system. Their capital assets and productive enterprises will form the Trusteeship Sector under the Gandhian socialist economy. Hence Gandhi said : "I would . . . allow the capitalist and the Zamindar, to keep their factory and their land, but I would make them, consider themselves trustees of their property."<sup>208</sup>

Gandhian concept of socialism inspite of its emphasis on Village Sector did not completely rule out the State Sector. The State Sector was to be primarily concerned with centralised and heavy industries and large scale enterprises. Still Gandhi was not favourably disposed towards transfer of the privately owned large-scale industries to the State Sector. He of course acknowledged that the State Sector would represent social interests in a far better way than the Private Sector of the laissez-faire variety; yet he preferred constitution of these private enterprises into Trusteeship Sector rather than their inclusion in the State Sector. Speaking about state ownership in place

of private ownership Gandhi said : "It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence . . . The State represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship."<sup>209</sup>

Gandhi an advocate of Khadi economy can not be expected to be a defender of textile mills. As he said : "I would not shed a single tear if all the mills were to close. If mills flourish, Khadi must die."<sup>210</sup> But he was not in favour of state take-over of the existing textile mills; rather he wanted their inclusion in the Trusteeship Sector. The textile mill-owners were expected to act as trustees of the society holding their mills on behalf of the society and taking from the income of these mills only such amount as their commission, as would be needed for meeting their essential needs.<sup>211</sup> He even ruled out joint ownership of the textile mills by the Government, the All India Spinners' Association and the mill-owners. Hence he said : "What I would personally prefer would be not a centralisation of power in the hands of the state but an extension of the sense of trusteeship, as in my opinion, the violence of the private enterprise is less injurious than the violence of the state."<sup>212</sup>

Although Gandhi conceived that the Trusteeship Sector will act as a counter-weight against the violence and force associated with the State Sector, the Trusteeship Sector shall not be completely free from the control of the state. If Gandhi was not in favour of transfer of the textile mills to the State Sector but its conversion as a part of the Trusteeship Sector, he was not prepared to permit them unbridled power to convert their position of power to a position of privilege.<sup>213</sup> He preferred putting them under strict state control. Besides, in the matter of fixation of commission for the trustees and selection of their heirs the state shall play a very important role.<sup>214</sup>

Besides, the Trusteeship Sector is a comparatively insignificant sector of his socialist economy whose continuance is contingent upon proper performance of the duties by the trustees. According to Gandhian prescription the trustees shall treat themselves as the custodians of their wealth on behalf

of the society and accept as their commission only that portion of the wealth that will be essential for a reasonably decent standard of living. But if they fail to discharge their obligations to the society as trustees, they will forfeit their claim to trusteeship and will be dislodged from the position of Trustees. Hence Gandhi said : "I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as Trustees; but if they fail, I feel we shall have to deprive them of their possessions, through the state with minimum exercise of violence."<sup>215</sup>

Gandhi had of course profound faith in man, his sociability, sense of compassion and sacrifice for others. However selfish one may be, through persuasion and moral appeal he may be made to relinquish his privileges for the sake of the society. But if in the guise of trusteeship the rich and the wealthy, the industrialists and the land-lords, indulge in self-aggrandisement and promotion of family interest, they will be dislodged from power and position of trustees. Gandhi would be but too happy if the large-scale and centralised sector remains under the care of the Trustees and the State Sector is circumscribed as far as possible, but he was not ready to risk the interest of the society and leave it at the mercy of the grabbing Trustees who are like hawks in dove's uniform. If all the trustees belie the trust Gandhi would not hesitate to eliminate the trustees altogether and abolish the Trusteeship Sector as well. Hence under the Gandhian concept of socialist economy the Trusteeship Sector has no inalienable and fixed domain; it may gradually shrink till its complete extinction, if the trustees prove faithless and fail to live upto his expectations.

#### **(b) The State Sector**

In the Gandhian scheme of social ownership although the Village Sector occupies a dominant position and a vast domain, the State Sector has not a very insignificant role to play. Gandhi was of course all along conscious that force and violence forms the very basis of the state and the state represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. He of course suggested that the sphere of state action should be circumscribed as far as possible but as a practical idealist he realised that in the sub-ideal state of human society, the state has some

significant role to play in the matter of socialist transformation. The Village Sector will no doubt, cover the entire consumers' goods industry; but he was pragmatic enough to realise that the consumers' goods industry presupposes some capital goods industry for the production of capital goods like machines and tools that shall be used for production of consumers' goods.

Gandhi was not opposed to machinery as such, but to machinery that mastered men, dehumanised them, and transformed them into automations, and facilitated exploitation of man by man and concentration of wealth in a few hands.<sup>216</sup> He was prepared to accept every machine, that tended to reduce human drudgery like the Singer Sewing machine.<sup>217</sup> Production of such machines, that "instead of becoming a hindrance, will be a help" implied, heavy industries producing such machinery. Hence although he believed that independent India can "discharge her duty towards a groaning world" by "developing her thousands of cottages", he said : "At the same time, I believe that some key industries are necessary."<sup>218</sup> Such key industries can not be established in each village and form a part of the Village Sector. They can only be planned, instituted and organised centrally and produce machines that may be used in each cottage for lightening the labour of the craftsmen and increasing their efficiency and productivity. Such key industries which require employment of a good many workers can not be left in the hands of the Private Sector or the Trusteeship Sector where the possibility of abuse of the power of trusteeship is not completely ruled out. Such industries must form a part of the State Sector, according to Gandhi. Hence he said : "I do not believe in armchair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership, where a large number of people, have to work together."<sup>219</sup>

In his Constructive Programme Gandhi had also said that although heavy-industries will occupy the least part of the vast national activity which will mainly be in the villages, the "heavy industries will need be centralised and nationalised."<sup>220</sup>

Thus the key and heavy industries were to be included in the State Sector. But Gandhi was cautious enough not to

include any and every industry in the category of key and heavy industry and thus advocate their inclusion in the State Sector Industries that can well be established in the villages, with a little effort, need not be classed under key industry and thus brought under the State Sector. Accordingly he said : "Key industries, industries which the nation needs, may be centralised. But then I would not choose anything as a key industry that can be taken up by the villages with a little organising."<sup>221</sup> When requested to express his opinion on the policy of progressive nationalisation of the Congress Socialist Party that was formed in 1934 Gandhi said : "I believe in the nationalisation of key and principal industries, as is laid down in the resolution of the Karachi Congress. More than that I can not at present visualise."<sup>222</sup>

As discussed earlier, the Karachi Resolution was a joint product of the minds of both Gandhi and Jawaharlal and both the master and the disciple defined therein the scope of the State Sector. The Karachi Resolution of the Congress reads : "The State shall own or control key industries, and services, mineral resources, railways, water ways, shipping and other means of transport."<sup>223</sup> It demonstrates the extent to which Gandhi was prepared to bring his socialist economy under the direct state ownership or control and the size of the State Sector. Gandhi was clear in his mind that all the key industries and services and all the vital sectors of the economy of the nation on which its prosperity depended but which can not be organised on individual craft, on village basis i.e., mining, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport shall form parts of state-owned economy and constitute the State Sector.

Jayaprakash Narayan's draft resolution prepared for the Congress Working Committee session at Ramgarh provided among other things : "All large scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control and in this behalf the state shall begin by nationalising heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries."<sup>224</sup> Gandhi "endorsed in general,"<sup>225</sup> the draft and this provides a clue to Gandhi's attitude towards key industries and the State Sector.

According to Gandhi apart from mining, shipping, railways, water-ways etc. generation and distribution of electricity, production of surgical instruments, sewing machines, and printing presses, may also be treated as key industries which may be brought under the State Sector.<sup>226</sup> Gandhi further said : "The heavy machinery for work of public utility which can not be undertaken, by human labour . . . would be owned by the State."<sup>227</sup>

The Gandhian scheme of State Sector thus greatly resembles the policy of the British Labour Party in respect of Public ownership and nationalisation with inclusion of Power, Mining and Transport, Road, Railway, Waterways and Airways in the State Sector.<sup>228</sup> Besides, the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 of the Government of India, appears to have been modelled on the Gandhian principle of State Sector. Schedule A of the Industrial Policy Resolution that is concerned with the exclusive monopoly of the State to set up new industries includes apart from other things items like Mining, Air transport, Railways transport, Ship building, Telephones and Cables, Telegraph and wireless apparatus and generation and distribution of electricity.<sup>229</sup>

But Gandhi was opposed to indiscriminate selection of industries for inclusion in the category of key-industries or heavy industries and thus their ultimate inclusion in the State Sector. As Gandhi said : "If you have only State production, men will become moral and intellectual paupers."<sup>230</sup> When Gandhi was requested to express his opinion on the policy of nationalisation of the newly formed Congress Socialist Party in 1934 he said : "The progressive nationalisation of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange is too sweeping to be admissible."<sup>231</sup> Rejecting the idea of State monopoly of foreign trade he said : "Should not the State be satisfied, with all the power it will possess ? Must it also exercise all the powers in one swoop whether such an exercise is necessary or not."<sup>232</sup>

Thus the State must be very much selective in respect of bringing industrial enterprises under the State Sector or its direct ownership or control. He rejected outright the idea of bringing under the domain of the State Sector all sorts of

industries or economic enterprises irrespective of their importance in the national economy and irrespective of the consequence that will follow therefrom. Hence as Mr. Shriman Narayan has very appropriately observed : "Wholesale nationalisation would of course be wrong and unnecessary. But selective and discriminate nationalisation of key sectors, is in line with Gandhian thought."<sup>233</sup>

Gandhi's State Sector unlike the Trusteeship Sector has not a bleak future. With every failure on the part of the Trusteeship Sector the domain of the State Sector gets inflated. Besides, with every new invention that is intended to promote general human happiness and lessen human drudgery, the horizon of the State Sector shall expand. Thus even in the Gandhian scheme whereas the Trusteeship Sector has before it a shrinking prospect and a bleak future, the State Sector has an expanding horizon, and a dazzling vision. As G. Ramachandran has very aptly put it, in the Gandhian scheme, "We have . . . thus the co-existence of a big public sector and an equally big private sector."<sup>234</sup>

To sum up, although Marxian socialists, inspite of their condemnation of the state as an instrument of class domination and exploitation and their advocacy for its complete elimination assign the State a place of pre-eminence in their scheme of socialist reconstruction, Gandhi, from the start suspicious of the violent nature of the State, has maintained a posture of consistency by scuttling its position of power and prestige as an instrument of socialist transformation. From the very commencement of the system of socialist reconstruction, the state is allowed only a truncated existence. The process of its withering away synchronises with the commencement of the process of socialist transformation. Through a system of decentralised economy, its wings have been clipped. The State is assigned a role in the process of socialist reconstruction not as an agent of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat but a Trustee of the societal interest. The state in his scheme of things enjoys such a subordinate place that some people have even doubted whether Gandhi can by any stretch of imagination be termed as a socialist. As H. T. Muzumdar has observed : "If the essence of socialism be complete collectivism and nationalisation of the

means of production, distribution, and exchange then Gandhi was not a socialist. If the abolition of private property be the crux of socialism, then Gandhi was not a socialist.”<sup>235</sup>

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## **CHAPTER 9**

# **GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND THE INDIAN SOCIALIST THOUGHT & PRACTICES**

### **REVIVAL OF INTEREST IN GANDHIAN VALUES**

**Mahatma Gandhi died a frustrated man. His spiritual assassination started a few years before the assassination of his mortal frame. The pool of blood that the assassin's bullet had shed, had soiled his frail body and his sparklingly white khadi no doubt but that was only symbolic of the bleeding heart that Gandhi had, prior to his physical assassination. As for his own admission, he was a sad "failure"<sup>1</sup>. He had to accept the partition of India inspite of his life-long espousal of the cause of a united India inspired by a spirit of secularism with cultural and religious harmony and assimilation. Though an apostle of non-violence, he had to witness an unprecedented upsurge of violence, hooliganism, vandalism, and burning and looting of each other's property in the wake of partition. He died a much misunderstood man. As Vincent Sheean writes : "The lesson he had tried to teach all through his long, tireless life was apparently not understood even in his own country."<sup>2</sup>**

**There was a time in Indian national history when people in the mainstream of the socialist movement of this country, considered Gandhi as an arch-enemy of socialism. Particularly during the thirties of this century socialist elements in the Indian National Congress considered him as a drag on India's march on the high road of socialism. Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship, the accommodation he provided to the landlords**



and the propertied class in his scheme of things, and his assurances to them that they would not be deprived of their possession if they acted as trustees, were misconstrued as signs of capitulation to the interests of the privileged class.

Jayaprakash Narayan, an architect of the Congress Socialist Party, writing in 1936, characterised Gandhism as a mixture of "timid economic analysis, good intentions and ineffective moralising."<sup>3</sup> Gandhi's theory of trusteeship was treated by him as a mask to conceal the privileges and protect the wealth and property of the capitalists and the landlords that they had already acquired in the past, and were still acquiring, by theft, and Gandhi was condemned for giving his seal of approval to such acts of organised theft and violence.<sup>4</sup> He further charged Gandhi of providing a "cloak for reaction and conservatism". As John Patrick Haithcox has observed: "To Narayan, and his followers, Gandhi was a 'reformist' and offered only palliatives for India's chronic and grievous social ills, when a perogative was required."<sup>5</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan himself acknowledges: "I was a critic of Gandhi in my socialist days."<sup>6</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru, the doyen of Indian Socialism felt during the thirties of this century, that Gandhi, his master and the mentor, was casting an impeding and restraining influence, on the progress of socialism in this country, and that the Congress under his influence was gradually converting itself into a mouth-piece of the privileged. Gandhi's pronouncements and policy during this period confirmed this conviction to a very large extent. Although Gandhi held Jawaharlal's brief in 1929 when the issue of Congress Presidentship was in the air, his justification for the same, included among other things, "Responsibility will mellow and sober the youth, and prepare them for the burden they must discharge."<sup>7</sup> On Jawaharlal Nehru's election to the Presidency of the Congress Gandhi urged and advised: "Steam becomes a mighty power only when it allows itself to be imprisoned in a strong little reservoir and produces tremendous motion and carries huge weights by permitting itself a tiny and measured outlet. Even so have the youth of the country, of their own freewill to allow their inexhaustible energy to be imprisoned, controlled and set free in strictly measured and required quantities."<sup>8</sup>

The rationale in the arguments of Gandhi was grasped by Jawaharlal in its true perspective. Accordingly when the Congress Working Committee with the knowledge of Gandhi, issued a statement on June 18, 1934, on the "loose talk about confiscation of private property, and necessity of class war" and affirmed : "The Working Committee is . . . . . of opinion that confiscation and class-war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence," Jawaharlal reacted violently. In his letter to Gandhi written during the brief spell of holiday from his life in prison, Jawaharlal wrote on August 15, 1934 : "The resolution of the Working Committee on the subjects showed such an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that it was painful to read it and to realise that it might be read outside India. It seemed that the over-mastering desire of the Committee was some how to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking non-sense. A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word which has clearly defined meaning in the English language in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood, and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver."<sup>9</sup>

Acharya Narendra Dev, who was perhaps of all the Marxian inspired socialists of India—with the solitary exception of Jawaharlal Nehru most pragmatic, practical, scientific and rationalistic in his approach to socialism, failed to discern any socialistic potentiality in the Gandhian concept of non-violent technique, class harmony and class accommodation, and Trusteeship of the rich; instead he advocated fomentation of class consciousness among the economically weaker section of the society. As he said in his Presidential address to the First Session of the All India Congress Socialist Conference held at Patna on the 17th May, 1934 : "The oppressed classes of society who have to win power can not afford to be consciously altruistic and they need to be class conscious because without developing a sense of class solidarity it is not possible for them to have an effective organisation which alone can win power for them."<sup>10</sup>

Thus the Marxian inspired socialists like Jayaprakash Narayan, Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Narendra Dev, were very much critical of Gandhi's philosophy of socialism, and his non-violent techniques—the techniques of persuasion, conversion and Trusteeship—were treated as devices to prop up the privileged and the class dominated society. They were almost one with Hiren Mukerjee when the latter said : "He (Gandhi) took serious note of the socialist trend, and set about in his own way to control it."<sup>11</sup> That was true of almost all the progressive and leftist elements in this country.

Assassination of Gandhi, a champion of the cause of the poor and the oppressed or the *Daridranarayan*, in the garden attached to the Birla Bhavan, a private house of G. D Birla—the Indian multi-millionaire who dominates the industrial and commercial world of the country—added an ironical overtone to Gandhi's profession and pronouncements as a socialist. His ultra-leftist critics exploited this incident to fortify their cry that Gandhi was a lackey of the capitalists, a stooge of the privileged class, a protagonist of their privilege and a promoter and defender of their purse. They found in this incident a long stick to beat Gandhian social philosophy and ascribe to it a bourgeois, non-progressive, reactionary and anti-socialist character.

But of late there has been a revival of interest in the Gandhian socialist values, so much so that certain features of Gandhian socialism are considered as cornerstones of Indian socialism. Particularly the emphasis of Gandhian socialism on the balanced development of man with moralistic and spiritualistic overtones, purity of means and more specifically the plea for the application of peaceful and non-violent technique for the attainment of socialist objective, its lack of emphasis on the centralised state as an apparatus of socialist transformation, its plea for a diffused system of social and community ownership and above all its emphasis on the worker-owned enterprises and co-operative ownership as the appropriate pattern of socialist economy, have tremendous appeal for all brands of socialists in India.

**(a) Emphasis on Ethical and Moral Values**

When the mild breeze of socialism swept over the country during the pre-liberation period, the primary inspiration was Marxian, and accordingly like the Marxian egalitarian philosophy, Indian socialism during its infancy and days of adolescence assumed a materialistic overtone. The Congress Socialist Party formed on the morrow of the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement as protest against the conservative policy of the Congress leadership, no doubt consisted of militant nationalists; but the primary inspiration for their militant nationalism was provided by the compelling passion of early termination of imperialistic economic exploitation and exploitation of the masses by the national bourgeoisie, landlords, the landed aristocrats and money-lenders. They found in nationalism a handle for early termination of the distress of the millions, and thus an economic dimension dominated their nationalistic horizon.

M.R. Masani speaking at the Congress Socialist Conference said : "Socialists felt that the Civil Disobedience Movement failed because of inadequate mass response."<sup>12</sup> But the problem before the socialists was how to arouse such mass response ? The socialists realised that unless the national movement, its strategy and slogans reflect the aspirations of the masses, and hold out assurances to remove their economic slavery and servitude the masses would not feel enthused to lend their sympathy and support to the Movement. Accordingly Acharya Narendra Dev in his Presidential address to the first session of the All India Socialist Conference at Patna on 17th May, 1934, indicated the emptiness and inadequacy of the slogans of democracy and political freedom to enthuse the masses and enlist their support for the national movement and said : "These abstract ideas make no appeal to the masses, because they have no meaning for them. They can however be made restive and class conscious and can come into the arena of active warfare only when an economic appeal is made to them. Whenever they have arisen, their slogan has been removal of some specific grievance and not the slogan of liberty and equality."<sup>13</sup>

The Congress Socialist Party therefore from its inception

was determined to categorically define the objective behind the national movement or the struggle for Swaraj and give an economic content to it. Hence the 15-point Programme of the C.S.P. distinctly highlighted the economic overtone of the Party's aspirations. The Programme included among other things transfer of all powers to the producing class, planning, regulation and control of the economy by the state, socialisation of key and principal industries, Insurance and Public Utilities with a view to the progressive socialisation of the exchange, state monopoly in foreign trade, elimination of the princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation, liquidation of the debts of the peasants and workers, recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the state and distribution of economic benefits among citizens on the basis of the needs of the individuals.<sup>14</sup> The Party also took a pledge to organise the peasants and labourers "for the purpose of developing and participating in the day to day economic and political struggle."<sup>15</sup> Thus the burden of emphasis of the Party's programme was economic.

Jayaprakash Narayan while holding the brief of the C.S.P. in the thirties, harped on the "economic freedom" of the masses. He emphasised on "a minimum economic programme as will when put to practice, free the masses from economic exploitation, and transfer full political and economic power into their hands."<sup>16</sup> Thus while the immediate objective of the Party was to "develop the anti-imperialist movement", the ultimate goal laid emphasis not only on emancipation of the masses from foreign domination, but also their economic liberation from "the native system of exploitation."<sup>17</sup> Hence as Acharya Narendra Dev has put it : "The C.S.P. adopted the policy to fervently and persistently agitate within the Congress for the adoption of an economic programme with a view to socialise the national struggle."<sup>18</sup>

But during the post-independence period the emphasis of Indian socialism has shifted from mere material to moral, ethical and spiritual development of man and the socialist parties and the socialist thinkers of India are harping more emphatically on the ethical, spiritual and moral development of man that forms the very core of the Gandhian concept of

socialism. A close study of the Indian socialist thought and practices after independence will indicate that Indian socialism is gradually traversing the spiritual, ethical and moralistic road laid down by Gandhi.

Jayaprakash Narayan by the early forties grasped the inadequacy of materialistic aspect of socialism and moved closer to Gandhi in respect of the significance of moral, ethical and spiritual values, in the realm of socialist thought. Accordingly rejecting the materialistic interpretation of socialism, he said at Nasik : "Is everything due to economic inequalities ? Is Capitalism the only evil ? Can we entirely depend upon class-struggle ? I do not think so. Economic approach can not be the only approach ? We have been preaching all this all these years. I feel that our approach has a limited appeal."<sup>19</sup> Earlier while preparing a blue print of Swaraj structured on the foundation of social justice and economic freedom he roundly discounted that material welfare shall be its sole objective. "It shall aim" as said Jayaprakash Narayan, "at healthy living and the moral and intellectual developments of the individual."<sup>20</sup>

Rammanohar Lohia, the convinced Gandhian socialist since his advent into the realm of the socialist movement, discounted as extremely inadequate the economic interpretation of socialism and underlined the moral, ethical and spiritual aspects of the concept. He considered capitalism and communism as equally irrelevant because of their materialistic overtones. He discovered that "Capitalism and Communism, share a community of economic aims" and communism differs from capitalism only marginally, since communism, inherits capitalism's "processes and forces of production and alter only its relations." Such over-emphasis on economic aims and objective fail to satisfy the real human need—the balanced development of human personality. Hence as Dr. Lohia observed : "Apart from the question of property relationships the economic premises of both blocs (capitalist or Atlantic and the Soviet bloc) are kindred and they ensure neither a full stomach nor a free mind."<sup>21</sup> He made a fervent plea for a system and pattern of social structure that fulfils the double objectives of full stomach and a free mind for all. Development of a free mind and moral, spiritual and ethical development

can not be sacrificed on the altar of mere economic affluence. There must be a balanced development both of mind and body and fulfilment of both material needs and spiritual excellences. Accordingly he said : "Bread and culture are here inseparable. If one is asked to wait, the other must wait as well. The taste and quantity of bread depends upon the quality of culture and vice-versa."<sup>22</sup>

Hence the socialist ideal of Lohia embraces a remarkable conjunction of economic development and the spirituality of freedom.<sup>23</sup> He did not stop here. He went beyond it and felt that the ideal social structure of socialism shall not only synthesise material and spiritual development; it should also be inspired by a deep sense of religiosity. As he said : "While a socialist may be a believer or an atheist or even an agnostic he can not stay unconcerned about religion. Socialists will also do well to feel some what humble towards the compassionate discipline and the ethical training of religion."<sup>24</sup> Thus Lohia's ultimate socialist ideal, comprehends an integrated fulfilment of the material, spiritual and even religious needs of man that seemed to him to be "the best available method today for making man's sojourn on earth good as well as joyous."<sup>25</sup>

The Socialist Party of India, organised by Lohia after his parting of ways with the P.S.P. also laid as much stress on the spiritual development of man and his balanced development, as on his material welfare. The Policy Statement of the Party toed the line indicated by Lohia. It expressed concern at the fractional development of man both under capitalism and communism. Portraying the picture of man both under capitalism and communism it observed : "The individual man is also divided within himself so that his personality receives maximum expression in one direction and is atrophied in another and he is not even aware of the need of freedom for full expression "<sup>26</sup> Hence the Party accepted the development of an "integrated mankind" as the objective of the socialist civilisation "where equality is also fulness in matters material and of the mind."<sup>27</sup>

Acharya Narendra Dev gradually grasped the inadequacy of economism, completely alienated from ethical, spiritual and moral values. Hence while framing the Policy Statement of the

P.S.P. in 1955, he laid as much stress on spiritual, cultural and moral revival of man as on his economic emancipation. Accordingly he said : "Socialism is not only an economic movement but also a cultural movement. It strives as much for real human culture as for a new economic order."<sup>28</sup> Thus Acharya Narendra Dev advocated cultural, spiritual and moral emancipation of man under socialism not only to provide a non-materialistic dimension to socialism but also to ensure, a balanced development of human personality that he considered to be the very essence of socialism. Under a socialist system of his conception, the inmates of the community will not only share "the enjoyment of the cultural heritage of humanity"; as he felt : "All economic enterprises should be required to provide houses of culture for and facilities for the cultural advancement of their workers."<sup>29</sup>

Besides, Acharya Narendra Dev, advocated ethical, moral and spiritual upsurge of man because he felt that it shall create a climate more conducive to the emergence of an egalitarian society. He grasped like his socialist friends that the creation of an egalitarian society presupposes the shedding of egotism, and self-aggrandisement and cultivation of a non-exploitative spirit. But mere economic reorganisation or creation of non-exploitative economic institutions by themselves will fail to effect such a change-over unless they are reinforced by "the evolution of a real human culture for the class-less society free from domination and exploitation as well as from class conflicts and snobbishness."<sup>30</sup> But the evolution of such a socialist culture in turn pre-supposes, the creation of "human sentiments of socialised humanity" development of "moral personality" and the progress of "humanity and the integrity of personality".

The Acharya further felt that the evolution of "human sentiments", "socialised humanity" and "integrity of personality" that constitute the real core of self-fulfilment, consists not in egotism, self-aggrandisement or fattening oneself at the expense of the community but in "the sublimation of impulses and harmonisation of emotions in the promotion of 'Lokahit' broad human outlook and its creative realisations in action, the spirit of public service and the sense of responsibility, the



courage of conviction and strength to stand against social evil against all odds and circumstances.”<sup>31</sup>

Thus Acharya Narendra Dev gradually came round to the point that spiritual, ethical, moral and cultural upsurge of man rather than mere economic transformation of the society and transfiguration of the material needs of man, holds the key to socialism. The Praja Socialist Party by endorsing his views also accorded its seal of approval to the moral and spiritual nature of socialism.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the doyen of Indian socialism before and after independence. Although never a member of any socialist party of India, his sympathies were always with the socialists and he was not only one of them but the chief among them. Before independence he was spiritually one with the members of the C.S.P., although never a member of it. After independence, he was the principal brain behind the Avadi Resolution on Socialistic Pattern of Society, Nagpur Resolution of the Congress Party on Co-operative Commonwealth and the Bhubaneswar Resolution of the Party on Democratic Socialism, and he was the chief spokesman and the supreme architect of official socialism that the Congress Party in power espoused and implemented in its humble way. But the Marxian inspired socialism of Jawaharlal had at its initial stage a materialistic overtone. Hence in his Presidential address to the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress, while he emphatically asserted that he was a “socialist” and expressed his concern for the amelioration of the lot of the “peasantry and labour” and to “do away with the domination of any one class over another”, the burden of his emphasis was on the economic regeneration and material welfare. “The least that every worker in the field or factory, is entitled to” said Jawaharlal “is a minimum wage which will enable him to live in moderate comfort and human hours of labour which do not break his strength and spirit.”<sup>32</sup>

Subsequently, in his Presidential address to the Lucknow Congress, he also outlined his socialistic conviction. But even here, his emphasis on the economic aspects of socialism was clearly in evidence. As he said : “When I use this word, I do so not in a vague, humanitarian, way but in the scientific,

economic sense.”<sup>33</sup> Not only the objective was economic in nature; the solution prescribed by him had an economic bias. He discovered his solution in economic organisation i.e. “the ending of private property except in a restricted sense and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of co-operative service”. Further he found a solution in the “rapid industrialisation of the country”.

In the post-independence period, while, Jawaharlal did not mince words to give expression to his socialistic conviction and spared no effort to commit his Party and his government to the cause of socialism, at the initial stage of reconstruction of the war-torn economy, further devastated by partition and communal frenzy, economic consideration gained primacy over spiritual or moral resurgence. When poverty was staring at the face, and shortage and scarcity of goods and services of all varieties were stalking the country, Jawaharlal’s socialism assumed greater economic emphasis. Increase in the production of goods and services of all varieties to tide over the situation of shortage and scarcity, and regulation and control of the productive mechanism to ensure emergence of an egalitarian society of affluence, became the hall-marks of Jawaharlal’s socialism. Hence elaborating the strategy for the fulfilment of the egalitarian objectives of the Socialistic Pattern of Society he urged at the Avadi Session of the Congress : “These can only be achieved by a considerable increase in national income and our economic policy must therefore aim at plenty and equitable distribution.”<sup>34</sup>

But gradually Jawaharlal grasped the hollowness and inadequacy of materialistic interpretation of socialism. He felt that mere piling up of wealth and equitable distribution of economic affluence, may lead to “an emptiness in the inner-life of man”. While conceding that the issue involved in socialism is partly an economic one, he apprehended : “There is a danger that socialism, while leading to affluence, and even equi-distribution may still miss some of the significant features of life.”<sup>35</sup> He deeply felt that materialistic affluence and solution of economic problems of man must be art-fully combined with his spiritual, moral and ethical resurgence so as to engender a viable socialist system. Rather Jawaharlal’s emphasis on the

ethical and spiritual aspect of socialism became more pronounced. As he said, "In the final analysis it is the quality of human beings that counts."

In spite of his Marxian background and earlier infatuation with communist economic and socialist ideals and admiration for the Soviet rate of development and Soviet achievements, Jawaharlal felt disillusioned in later fifties about the trend of development under the Communist system and particularly in Soviet Union. He realised that the emphasis in those countries was too much materialistic and therefore misdirected and misplaced. Accordingly he said: "Its contempt for what might be called the moral and spiritual side of life not only ignores something that is basic in man but also deprives human behaviour of standards and values."<sup>36</sup> He realised further that socialist transformation of India under his stewardship was in a bad way because there was undue emphasis on materialistic or economic development with complete disregard for the moral, spiritual and ethical development of man. As he said: "In our efforts to ensure the material prosperity of the country, we have not paid any attention to the spiritual elements in human nature. Therefore in order to give the individual and the nation a sense of purpose, something to live for and if necessary to die for we have to revive some philosophy of life and give in the wider sense of the word a spiritual background, to our thinking."<sup>37</sup> Hence after independence and particularly by the late fifties although Jawaharlal still subscribed to the view that socialism presupposes termination of the vicious system of poverty and elimination of disparity, he urged: "We must not forget the ethical and spiritual aspect of life which are ultimately the basis of culture and civilisation and which has given some meaning to life."<sup>38</sup>

Thus Jawaharlal gradually grasped that spiritual and ethical development of man and spiritual and ethical dimensions of socialism constitute the better face of socialism. Economic emancipation of man—his economic security and absence of economic disparity—is no doubt necessary; but spiritual and ethical upsurge of man is still more essential. Hence he said: "What I am concerned with is not merely our material progress but the quality and depth of our people."<sup>39</sup> In his last

testament on socialism, while he commended that the rate of economic growth should be speeded up he urged, "we must not forget that the essential objective to be aimed at is the quality of the individual and the concept of dharma underlying it."<sup>40</sup> The Congress Party that under Jawaharlal's stewardship transformed itself from a moderate nationalist organisation into a progressive and left inclined political party, in its resolution on Democratic Socialism adopted at Bhubaneswar in 1964, under Jawaharlal's inspiration and guidance, also resolved: "Mere material prosperity alone will not make human life rich and meaningful. Therefore along with economic development ethical and spiritual values will have to be fostered."<sup>41</sup>

Thus Indian socialism and Indian socialist thinkers have gradually realised the potency of the Gandhian emphasis on the moral, spiritual and ethical aspects of socialism.

#### **(b) Plea for Non-Violent and Peaceful Technique**

Modern Indian socialist thought, apart from its commitment to ethical, spiritual and moral values of socialism that constitute the core of Gandhian socialism, has also drawn itself closer to the Gandhian emphasis on the non-violent and peaceful technique for the attainment of socialism. Prem Bhasin speaking about the commitment of the C.S.P. that constituted the mainstream of Indian socialist movement during the pre-independence era said: "The Congress Socialist Party is a revolutionary Marxist organisation."<sup>42</sup> But this Marxian revolutionary candour with its adherence to violence gave way to the Gandhian peaceful and non-violent technique. This shift in emphasis became visible by the time the Party met in its first Post-War conference at Kanpur from 29th February to 1 March, 1947. As it has been observed: "The delegates assembled at the conference felt that a shift in the emphasis had become imperative. The party and the people of India had now to be prepared for a new peaceful and democratic fight and the fight for the establishment of a democratic socialist society in India."<sup>43</sup>

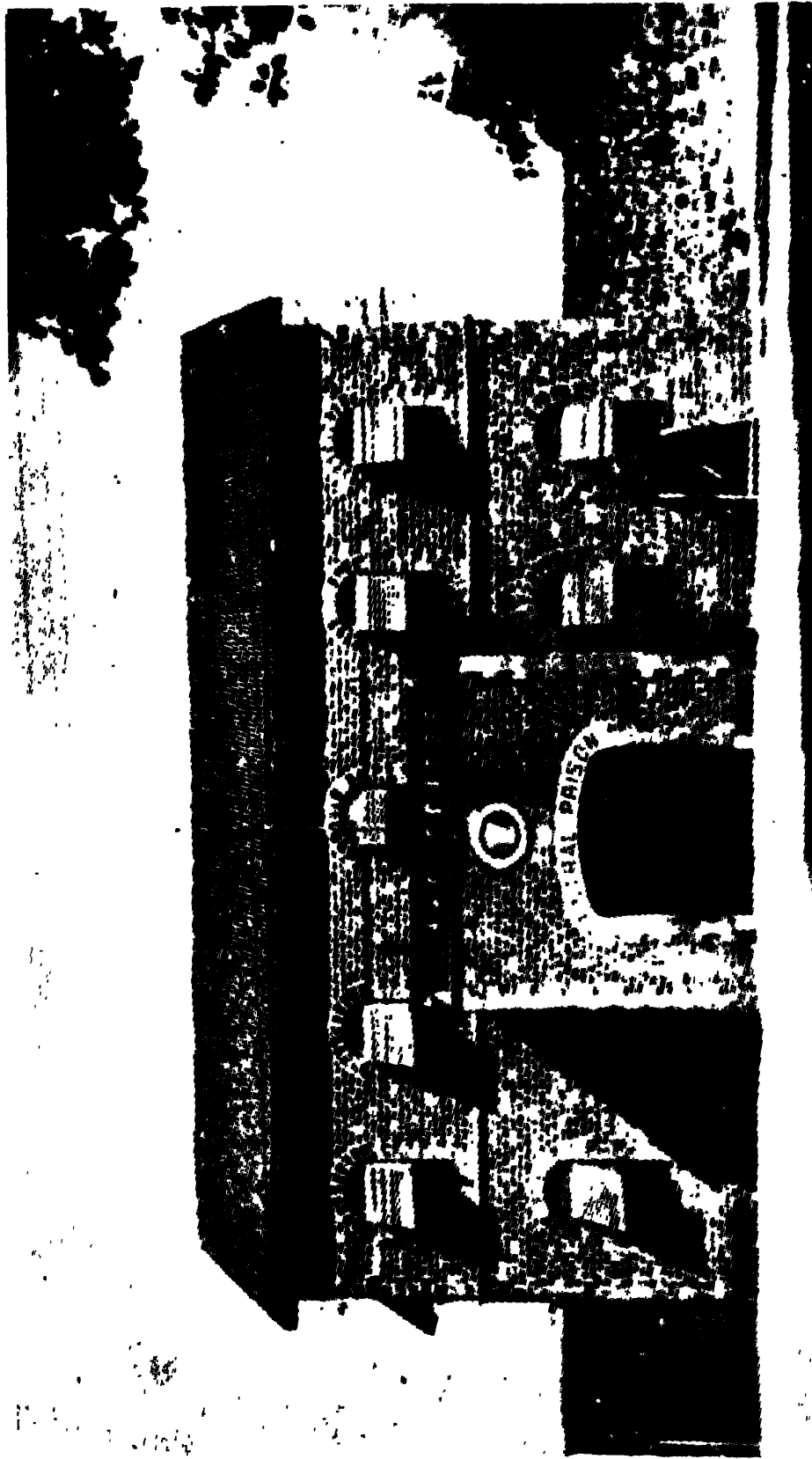
By the Nasik Conference of the Party that marked its final breach with the Indian National Congress, deep commitment of the Indian socialists to Gandhian technique of non-violence had

become almost complete. Jayaprakash Narayan in his report to the Conference recommended adherence to the Gandhian principle of purity of means and non-violent and peaceful technique for the sake of socialist transformation. As he said : "There were many things that Mahatma Gandhi taught us. But the greatest thing he taught us was that means are ends, that evil means can never lead to good ends and that fair ends require fair means. Some of us may have been sceptical of this truth but recent world events and events at home, have convinced me that nothing but good means will enable us to reach the goal of a good society which is socialism."<sup>44</sup> Subsequently Jayaprakash Narayan announced : "I should however, like to state now as emphatically as I can that socialism, in this country would neglect Gandhism at its own peril." Ashoka Mehta, Secretary of the Party, in his report to the Special Convention of the Party that met at Panchmarhi from May 23-27, 1952 affirmed equally emphatically : "The Socialist Party should declare, clearly and unequivocally, that it is committed to peaceful means for social change."<sup>45</sup> Ramanohar Lohia who presided over the Convention due to the illness of its Chairman Acharya Narendra Dev made a fervent plea for aligning Indian socialism with Gandhian non-violent technique. As he said : "Doctrines which ennoble violence are incapable of achieving a classless and a casteless society. Socialism must learn to distinguish itself rigorously from such doctrines. Socialism must ever denounce, the advocacy and organisation of violence."<sup>46</sup> In the clarification he provided he said : "We cannot build for socialism by adopting communist methods of class-struggle."<sup>47</sup>

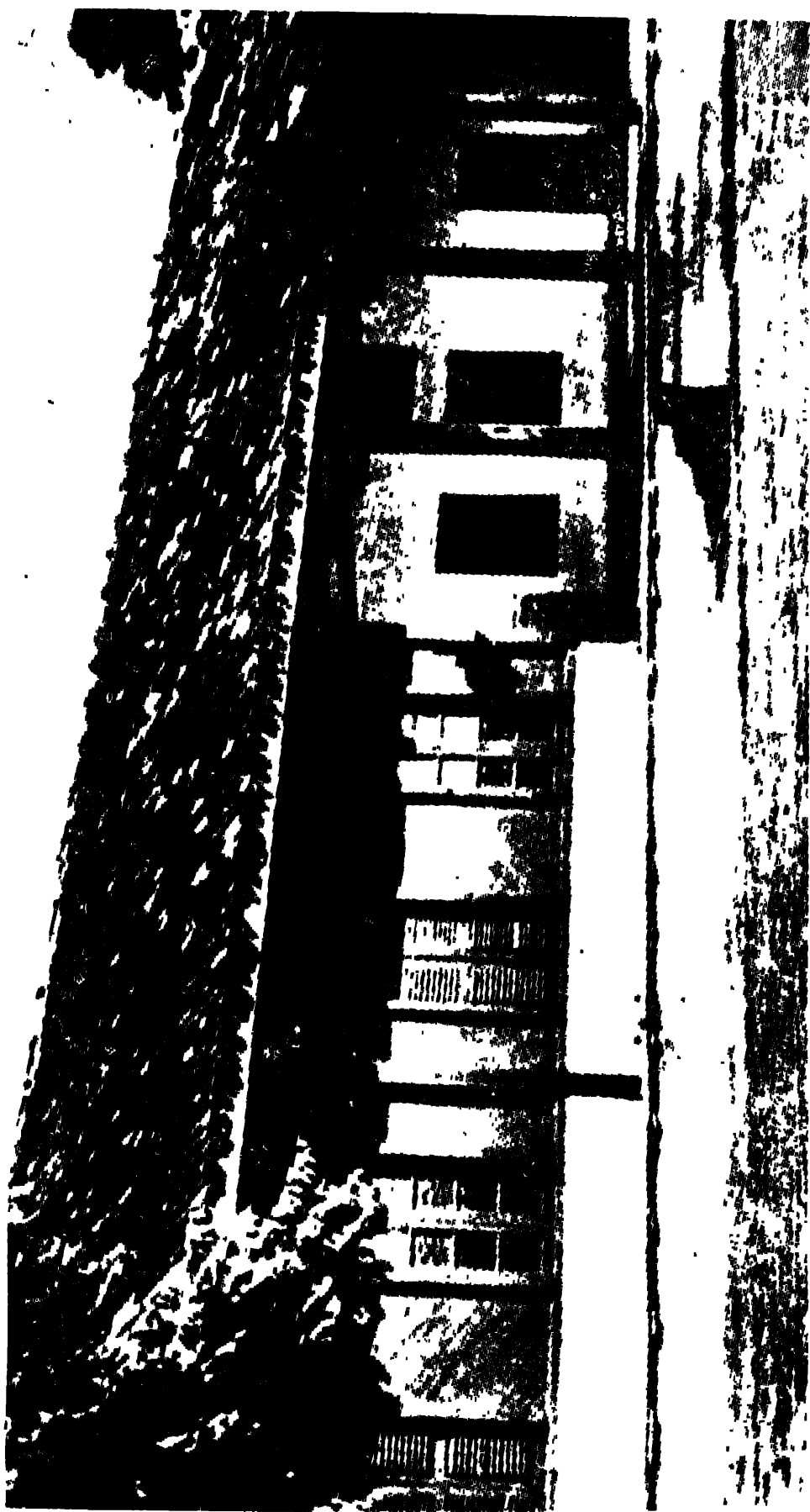
The fusion of the Socialist Party and the Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party headed by Acharya J. B. Kripalani and the consequent formation of the P.S.P. confirms the distinct swing of the Indian socialist movement towards Gandhism. The K.M.P.P. before its merger espoused the Gandhian ideal of Sarvodaya and with the gradual commitment of Jayaprakash Narayan the socialist leader to the ideal of Sarvodaya the Socialist Party was also coming closer to the Gandhian ideal. Under the influence of Lohia's and Jayaprakash's deep commitment to Gandhian values, the Socialist Party's political resolution adopted at



**Spinning for the warp & the woof of Socialist India.**  
(Gandhi with J.B. Kripalani).



**Yeravada Central Prison where Gandhi, the Socialist was lodged many a time for his revolt against Imperialism & Colonialism.**



**Gandhi's Ashram at Wardha**





**For them he wanted a Socialist Community.**

Panchmarhi Convention "contained favourable reference to co-operation between the party and the Sarvodaya movement."<sup>48</sup> Hence it is contended : "Gandhian outlook obviously brought the Party (Socialist Party) close to the K.M.P.P."<sup>49</sup> Professor Mukut Bihari Lal criticised such fusion as a type of capitulation of socialists and their Marxian principles in favour of Gandhism.

The P.S.P. that represented the mainstream of the democratic socialist thought of India at one stage remained deeply committed to Gandhian technique of non-violence as an instrument of socialist transformation. At the first National Conference of the P.S.P. held at Allahabad on 29-31 December, 1953, the party formally accepted renunciation of force as a revolutionary weapon and as the appropriate technique of socialist transformation. The Working Programme adopted at that Conference reads : "An imaginary contradiction has been allowed to grow between non-violent civil disobedience and class struggle . . . . . Civil Disobedience, and class-struggle, are but two names for a single exercise in power, reduction of the power of evil and increase in the power of the good. It must be repeated that an act of Civil Disobedience or class-struggle must pass the test of immediacy and it must not make use of lies or deceit or violence . . . . . The real issue is whether to organise the people's will on the basis of peaceful struggle or otherwise. The P.S.P. believes that it can best be organised on the basis of non-violence."<sup>50</sup>

When Rammanohar Lohia parted company with the P.S.P. and formed his Socialist Party, the main issue was a choice between violence and non-violence. Difference in outlook with some of his valued colleagues on the issue of co-operation with the Congress or at least a soft line of policy towards it was precipitated by police firing resorted to by the P.S.P. led Government of Travancore-Cochin that killed four persons. Lohia's emphasis on Gandhian philosophy of non-violence prompted him to organise another socialist party the hall-mark of whose strategy became one of non-violence. In his Presidential address at the Foundation Conference of the Socialist Party, Lohia commented sarcastically on December 28, 1955, having the police firing of Travancore-Cochin Government fresh in his

mind : "The land of non-violence, and Mahatma Gandhi seems determined to hold the record in the matter of police firing upon the people and deaths resulting therefrom."<sup>51</sup> Commenting upon the inability of the violent technique to usher in an era of socialist prosperity, fraternity, and freedom, he observed : "Mankind will ever hurtle from the hands of one tyranny and irresponsibility into another if it continues to seek and organise its revolutions through violence."<sup>52</sup> Putting his weight on the side of non-violent technique he said, "no man or party that wants human welfare can neglect the philosophical base of good will in the specific sense of mutual non-killing and non-hurt among them."<sup>53</sup>

Besides, the Praja Socialist Party that met at Gaya in December, 1955 also adopted a Policy Statement that puts a premium on Gandhian non-violent technique and rejected outright the insurrectionary method for the sake of socialist transformation. Its chairman Acharya Narendra Dev a convinced Marxist, while framing the Policy Statement of course gave expression to his Marxian fervour when he wrote : "Socialism strongly holds that the class-struggle of the oppressed classes is as just as the national struggle for freedom against foreign domination . . . . History does not record a single case where an entire class of people in response to moral appeals so changed its outlook and attitude, as to allow the liquidation of its dominance and privileges without some sort of pressure and conflict. And there is no reason to believe that Indian capitalists would prove more human than their compeers in the rest of the world."<sup>54</sup> At the same time he observed : "It will not be wise on the part of Indian socialists to strive for a violent insurrection."<sup>55</sup> Citing the Soviet experience he observed : "Nor can it be maintained that an insurrection is necessarily the shortest and easiest route to a socialist regime."<sup>56</sup>

But the most interesting part of the analysis is contained in the fact that the rationale furnished in justification of the same is Gandhian in inspiration and particularly the Gandhian emphasis on the indissoluble bond between ends and the means. Hence he observed like Gandhi : "The purity of means is as necessary as the purity of ends. Evil means can never lead to

good ends. Fair ends require fair means.”<sup>57</sup>

Thus both the socialist parties that came into being after Gandhi's assassination were deeply committed to the Gandhian concept of non-violent technique. Hence as Saul Rose has very appropriately observed : “Non-violence had by this time come to be an accepted feature of Indian socialism.”<sup>58</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru, who also represented the official version of Indian socialist thought after independence, inspite of his deep attachment to Gandhi and sincere commitment to Gandhian values, under the influence of Marxism and Bolshevism, was sceptical during the late twenties and the thirties of this century that socialism could be ushered in, with the help of the non-violent technique. On the other hand under the influence of Marxism and with a first-hand knowledge of the Soviet attempt, revolutionary and violent technique appealed to him as the most appropriate and essential instrument for socialist transformation. Accordingly in his autobiography written during this period he has written : “In India only a revolutionary plan could solve the two related questions of the land and industry as well as every other major problem before the country.”<sup>59</sup> He rejected outright, the plea for gradual and slower tempo of progress towards the creation of an egalitarian society and advocated instead “a complete break with the existing order.”<sup>60</sup> Of course under Gandhian influence he was convinced that means and ends are so intimately related that they can be hardly separated from one another and that “the means must be such as lessen-conflict and hatred or at any rate try to limit them as far as possible and to encourage goodwill”; yet the Gandhian non-violent technique of Trusteeship as a device for socialist transformation was unacceptable to Jawaharlal. Accordingly in his Presidential address at the Lahore Session of the Congress he said : “The new theory of trusteeship which some advocate is . . . barren. For trusteeship means that the power for good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustee and he may exercise it as he will. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of an individual or group.”<sup>61</sup>

But during the post-independence era Jawaharlal believed that not only non-violent technique is the most appropriate,

effective and the most potent weapon for socialist transformation; under the influence of Gandhian values, he subscribed to the ideology that non-violent technique is the only sane and sensible apparatus for egalitarian reconstruction of society.

During the years Jawaharlal was at the apex of political power and assumed the responsibility of socialist transformation of Indian economy and social system, he becomes so deeply committed to the Gandhian norms and Gandhian values that the Gandhian non-violent and peaceful technique became the guiding principle and the pole star of his socialist strategy. In his broadcast to U.S.A. from Delhi a few months after independence he said: "So long as we do not adhere to right means the end will not be right and fresh evil will flow from it. That was the essence of Gandhiji's message and mankind will have to appreciate it in order to see and act clearly."<sup>62</sup> In his interview to R.K. Karanjia a few years before his death, he said, "I will call ours the authentic Gandhian era and the policies and philosophy, which we seek to implement are the policies and philosophy taught to us by Gandhi."<sup>63</sup> But elaborating on the essence of Gandhian thought and the nature of his indebtedness to it he further said, "The most important thing he insisted upon was the importance of means; ends were shaped by the means that led to them and therefore the means had to be good, pure, and truthful. That is what we learnt from him and it is well we did so."<sup>64</sup>

Hence inspite of the Marxian influence upon him from his youth, Jawaharlal held at a discount the violent technique in general and those that were being practised in Soviet Union in particular. Under the enrapturing influence of Gandhian norm of purity of means as that of the end and the indissoluble bond between them he has written: "Unfortunately communism became too closely associated with the necessity for violence and thus the idea which it placed before the world became a tainted one. The means distorted the ends. We see here the powerful influence of wrong means and method."<sup>65</sup> Thus in the post-independence era, while still passionately desiring the end of capitalistic exploitation and the misery of millions and a rationalistic and egalitarian reordering of society, violent technique for the attainment of the same had no appeal

for him. When violent technique was projected through the prism of Gandhian norm of purity of means as that of the end, Jawaharlal discovered its deficiency and rejected it outright. As he said : "This is completely opposed to the peaceful approach which Gandhi taught us . . . speaking for myself I find this approach wholly unscientific, unreasonable and uncivilised." Speaking about socialism he urged, "Socialism should therefore be considered apart from . . . the inevitability of violence" and it should be rigidly tagged together "to the basic approach of peaceful means."<sup>66</sup> Hence although he discovered in socialism the panacea for the economic ills from which the country suffered, and the class-conflict that afflicted the society, under Gandhian influence and in line with Gandhian socialist strategy, he became deeply committed to peaceful methods and the non-violent strategy.<sup>67</sup>

Under Gandhian influence, Jawaharlal held that socialism should steer clear of the violent technique. As the chief spokesman of the Party in power, he got the Congress Party deeply committed not only to socialism, but also to the non-violent and peaceful technique for the attainment of the same. In the resolution on socialism, that was adopted at the Avadi session of the Congress, the emphasis was on the Socialistic Pattern of Society instead of socialism pure and simple, because the desire was to delineate the Indian brand of socialism from the socialism of the communist variety, that is too intimately allied to violent techniques. Speaking in the context of the Avadi Resolution and the objective of Socialistic Pattern of Society while emphasising on the egalitarian reconstruction of the socio-economic structure Jawaharlal stressed : "We have also to understand that our background is in many ways, peculiar particularly the Gandhian background."<sup>68</sup> At the Bhubaneswar session of the Congress the Party while categorically committing itself to socialism and establishment of a socialist society expressed equally unequivocally : "This change has to be achieved by peaceful means."<sup>69</sup>

### **(c) Commitment to Decentralised System**

The Indian socialist thought and movement have not only gradually veered round the Gandhian emphasis on spiritual,

moral and ethical development of man in the context of development of his integrated personality and the adoption of the non-violent strategy for the attainment of a socialist society; they have equally unequivocally committed themselves to the Gandhian prescription of a decentralised system of economy and social and political structure. Although the Indian socialist movement—as distinguished from the Indian Communist Movement—was profoundly influenced by Marxism, Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Soviet pattern of planned development under the auspices of the state, from the very start, presumably under the impact of Gandhian egalitarian philosophy, it had rejected outright concentration of economic power in the hands of the state, and advocated a diversified system of economy with diffusion of industries, crafts or economic enterprises throughout the length and breadth of the country and their organisation on co-operative basis as far as possible.

When the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934 with Marxists like Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan at the helm of affairs, the programme of the Party did not encompass all-embracing state ownership but “socialisation of key and principal industries (e.g. Steel, Cotton, Jute, Railways, Shipping, Plantations, Mines), Banks, Insurance and Public Utilities.”<sup>70</sup> Hence the emphasis was on “socialisation” although “Progressive socialisation of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange”, rather than wholesale “state ownership”. The Programme also equally passionately adhered to the Gandhian emphasis on “Co-operatives for production, distribution and credit” in the sectors that remained beyond the pale of the socialised sector. Even in the field of agriculture it advocated co-operative farming in preference to forced collectivisation of agriculture.<sup>71</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan in his draft resolution on the picture of Swaraj sent to Gandhi but meant for consideration by the Congress Working Committee, meeting at Ramgarh, while advocating nationalisation of “heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries” came closer to Gandhian economic prescription for socialist reconstruction, when he espoused the cause of “small scale production carried on by individual or co-operative effort.”<sup>72</sup> Although he conceded the

state management of "large scale collective production" he like Gandhi desired to take the sting out of state ownership and control, that engenders bureaucratisation and dehumanisation, by providing for workers' participation in such state managed collective production.<sup>73</sup>

Acharya Narendra Dev during the heyday of his Marxian socialism, although considered "wholly self-sufficient village economy" impracticable<sup>74</sup> and was favourably disposed towards a greater dose of State ownership and control, conceded that even under socialism there is room for the Gandhian concept of decentralised village economy and said, "the village crafts should be revived and the economy of the village set upon its legs."<sup>75</sup> He went still further in subscribing to the Gandhian model of co-operativisation instead of the Soviet brand of collectivisation of agriculture as the most appropriate device for bringing the peasants to the fold of socialism and making them the vehicle of socialist transformation. Accordingly in his address to the Annual Conference of the All India Kisan Sabha in March 1939 he said : "Our objective will be to re-educate the main mass of the peasantry in the spirit of socialism and to bring the bulk of the peasantry unto line with socialist reconstruction through the medium of co-operative societies."<sup>76</sup> He further added : "It is possible to get the main mass of the peasantry to travel along this road (road of socialism) if we make the proper approach to them. Obviously co-operative production, exchange and consumption, on the basis of free peasantry is the only sound and practical approach to the problem. The village can be set on its feet only as a co-operative commonwealth."<sup>77</sup>

Rammanohar Lohia grasped better than most of his socialist brethren that decentralised economy with small-scale organisation dispersed in villages and towns and organised on owner-worker or co-operative basis constitutes the sure technique of socialist transformation. His theory of equal irrelevance of communism as that of capitalism stemmed from the fact that the former borrowed from the latter the whole apparatus and technique of large-scale and centralised system of production that elevates to a dizzy height a dictatorial party and a dictatorial state that throws to the four winds socialist values like equality,



freedom, fraternity and fellowship.

Besides according to Lohia the philosophy of socialism is rooted on the principle of immediacy. As Lohia felt, any economic system and political organisation in order to satisfy the socialist objective, must fulfil the test of immediacy. But communism no less than capitalism, flourishes and fattens on the principle of remoteness. The heavy-machine system of production, organised and operated centrally and producing on a huge scale, engenders alienation of man from the system under which he works. If socialist values like equality, freedom, fraternity and fellowship are sacrificed under communism, it is due to this alienation of man from the system, effected through this principle of remoteness—remoteness in ownership, operation, and control—that is the bye-product of the mechanical system of production organised and operated centrally and engaged in production on huge scale. The problem is further accentuated if the centralised ownership, operation and control that the machine system of large-scale production engenders is combined with an authoritarian Party and a totalitarian state. As Lohia said : “Ownership of property by the state exclusively at the centre goes with mass production and is disastrous both for bread and freedom.”<sup>78</sup>

Thus Lohia emerged as a bitter critic of large-scale production by heavy-machine, centralised ownership and control, and predominance of the Leviathan state in the field of socialist reconstruction and advocated instead “a new mode of rationalisation and a corresponding mode of ownership”<sup>79</sup> that shall through the operation of “the principle of immediacy” better promote socialist values. Such “new mode of rationalisation” and a “corresponding mode of ownership” encompass “small unit machine run by electricity or oil” and “principle of decentralisation” respectively.

Lohia’s plea for “small unit machine” is far from being a plea for reversion back to primitivism in the realm of technology; rather it is a plea for harnessing modern technology to the need of a society that shall ensure full blossoming of the personality of man and his balanced and integrated development, while solving the problems of an inegalitarian society through the application of the twin principles of “immediacy”

and "decentralisation". Such "small unit machine" while becoming the "maid-of-all work or as many kinds as possible" shall promote the "principle of immediacy"—immediacy in ownership, operation, control and output—and put an end to alienation, that is associated with heavy machine, centralised operation and control, and large scale production. This immediacy in ownership, operation and control will release all the creative faculties of man that remain strangled under large-scale production and centralised control and will facilitate full blossoming of socialist values like equality, freedom, fraternity and fellowship.

But what is more important, decentralisation and diffusion of ownership and organisation are built into the system of small-unit machine. As Lohia realised the system of small unit machine "is the embodiment of the whole principle of decentralisation" and "shall be built on the principle of immediacy in operation".<sup>80</sup> Lohia was of the opinion that socialism must devise a system of economic organisation, that "shall diffuse democracy and power to the smallest unit which assist every being to travel on the road of initiative and responsibility".<sup>81</sup> Small-unit machine is such a device that will facilitate emergence of decentralised economic organisation because as he expected: "This machine shall be available to hamlet and town as much to city."<sup>82</sup>

Coming to the exact form of organisation of the economy it may be said that although Lohia did not overlook the fact that basic industries like iron and steel and river-valley projects should be centrally owned, organised and operated, yet he advocated dispersion of ownership and operation of less important sector of the economy in homes and hamlets as much as centrally owned by the state. Of course he advocated that industries or economic enterprises should be so owned and organised that it provides "maximum possible initiative to the people in their smallest unit".<sup>83</sup> But he was communitarian enough to suggest: "Property of appropriate types must be owned by the village and the province, as much as by the centre and by co-operatives."<sup>84</sup> Particularly like Gandhi and perhaps under his influence he had a preference for co-operatives as communal form of ownership. As he said while preparing

the policy statement of the P.S.P. : "Co-operatives of various kinds and degree will be set up in order to organise the use of tools and cattle and also for marketing and other purposes. Co-operative agriculture shall also be encouraged in consultation with those willing to participate in such endeavour."<sup>85</sup>

Even if Lohia did not brush aside the state completely from the scheme of socialist economic reconstruction and instead expected that it shall play a predominant role in the sphere of large scale and basic industry like Gandhi, he desired to restrain and regulate the totalitarianism of the state, the party, and the political bureaucracy by induction of workers' control into the system and by the creation of independent autonomous corporations. Hence as he said : "After nationalisation of the industries step will be taken to set up independent autonomous corporations, representing Labour, Consumers and the Government to administer these industries."<sup>86</sup>

Thus Lohia was convinced that a decentralised system of economy with dispersion of ownership and diffusion of economic enterprises in the length and breadth of the country, operated in the homes of the workers and in hamlets, and co-operatively organised as far as possible shall herald the advent of a true socialist civilisation.

Apart from the eminent Socialist thinkers the Socialist Parties of India have also traversed and are still traversing the socialist path laid by Gandhi in respect of decentralised economy, dispersion of ownership, diffusion of control, and communitarian organisation of economy with its emphasis on co-operatives.

The Praja Socialist Party during its heyday was deeply committed to a decentralised system of economy since centralisation, it felt, shall lead to bureaucratisation and totalitarianism and alienation of man from the system. The Party's programme encompassed an integration of both large-scale industries and small-scale and cottage industries, dispersed in villages. Although the small-scale and cottage industries must be technologically viable ones the "Planned socialist economy must . . . provide for the development of small-scale industries" and the small-scale industries dispersed in the villages "must receive devoted attention of the State".<sup>87</sup>

Although the Party's Policy Statement comprehends co-

existence of large-scale and small-scale industries, the large-scale industries should not be centrally owned so as to generate bureaucratisation and dehumanisation and thus spell the loss of socialist values. The large-scale industries when found indispensable, may be owned, apart from the state, by the constituent states of the Union, local self-governing bodies and even villages.<sup>88</sup>

In respect of the pattern of operation of the economy the Party was in favour of large-scale nationalised industries being operated by autonomous corporations with scope for workers' participation in such industries.<sup>89</sup> At the same time the Party felt, "Co-operatives are an essential factor in socialisation."<sup>90</sup> Industrial co-operatives in the field of small-scale and cottage industries, co-operative farming, multipurpose co-operative societies for marketing, irrigation, supply of better seeds, manures, implements etc., as well as for the processing of agricultural products, and consumers co-operative societies found favour with the Party.<sup>91</sup>

Thus the Party instead of advocating a centralised system of economy made a fervent plea for a decentralised system, with ownership, management and control diffused and co-operatives occupying a dominant place in the system.

The Socialist Party formed after Lohia's parting of ways with the P.S.P. also accepted the Gandhian concept of decentralised system of economy, with loosening of the grip of the Leviathan state as the very pre-condition of socialist living and socialist society. Its conviction that "The Government of the people, by the people, for the people, will be achieved through the government of the commune, by the commune for the commune on the one hand and the government of mankind by mankind for mankind on the other" and consequently its plea for decentralisation of the sovereign authority of the state and its diffusion among villages, towns and districts had its economic counterpart in its advocacy for a form of decentralised system of economy.<sup>92</sup>

The Party while advocating socialisation and rationalisation of all means of production that hire labour and all main industries like iron and steel, engineering, sugar, textiles, cement, mines, electric power and chemicals and state take-

over of export, import and wholesale trade, it equally advocated popularisation of small unit machine, and thus diffusion of ownership and control.<sup>93</sup> As the Election Manifesto of the Party of 1962 reads : "Economic decentralisation corresponding to political and administrative decentralisation should be brought about through maximum utilisation of small machine"<sup>94</sup>

To check the tyranny of the Leviathan state appearing in the guise of social ownership and control it contemplated ownership and management of socialised undertakings by autonomous public corporations, in whose management and control, planning and operation, workers shall have their say.<sup>95</sup> Besides, in order to make the decentralisation of control more effective, the Party was pledged to decentralise the socialised and the nationalised sector through their operation and management by "village, city and district panchayats". That apart, it advocated municipalisation of local public utility services like electricity, gas, water and entertainment.

The Gandhian concept of co-operative socialism also found favour with the Socialist Party. The small unit machine system of production as advocated by the Party may be dispersed in the homes of the producers and the hamlets and may be co-operatively organised and operated. The Party also advocated co-operative farming and marketing co-operatives.<sup>96</sup>

The Indian National Congress gradually drifted towards socialism during the pre-independence period due to the internal pressure exerted on it by inspired and impassioned socialists like Jawaharlal and members of the Congress Socialist Party, and external pressure of other Marxists and the communists. The compulsion of events and circumstances after independence also carried it further on the road of commitment to socialism. But Congress socialists from early days abjured the tendency towards centralisation and concentration of economy and advocated instead a system of decentralisation, diffusion and dispersion of economic enterprises in the length and breadth of the country and co-operativisation of communitarian property as far as possible.

The Karachi Resolution of the Congress on Economic Policy that accepted a modest scheme to socialise the economy was far from being an attempt to centralise the economy or to

introduce statism. On the other hand the scope of state ownership was confined to key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, water-ways, shipping and other means of transport.<sup>97</sup> The National Planning Committee constituted by the Congress towards the end of 1938, while preparing a scheme for severely restricting the scope of free enterprise and extending the scope of state ownership and control, also contained a plea for the decentralisation and dispersion of economic ownership and control and promotion of co-operative organisation of agricultural and industrial economy. In the sphere of public utilities like gas, electricity, water supply etc. while the Committee advocated state ownership, instead of their centralisation and ownership by the Central Government, it had a preference for ownership of such enterprises by provincial governments and local boards. Even in respect of such form of state ownership the Committee advocated autonomous public trusts in order to liberate them from the grip of statism. Besides, the Committee had preference for organisation and management of the economy on co-operative basis in the industrial and agricultural sectors.<sup>98</sup>

The Congress Election Manifesto of 1945 preceding the election to the Central and State legislatures, in fixing its attention on benefiting the masses and preventing "concentration of wealth and power in the hands of individuals and groups" while pledged itself to extension of social control on "mineral resources, means of transport and the principal methods of production and distribution in land industry and in other departments of national activity" pitched its ambition on development of India into a "Co-operative Commonwealth" instead of evolving a centralised and bureaucratised economic and political system.<sup>99</sup> In the scheme of things cottage industries occupied a prominent place and co-operative farming, industrial co-operatives and co-operative credit societies were emphasised upon for the egalitarian transformation of the economy.<sup>100</sup> Besides, although the State was to "own or control key and basic industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways shipping and other means of public transport" such industries were to be decentralised as far as possible.

The Congress Party took a firm pledge for the establishment

of a Socialistic Pattern of Society at Avadi. But emphasis was laid on "social ownership or control" of the principal means of production for the attainment of such society. To usher in such a society the state was required to "play a vital part" and the public sector was expected to "play a progressively greater part" in the economy particularly in the sphere of establishment of basic industries: yet the Party did not adopt a scheme of all-enveloping state ownership. The non-state sector and particularly the small industries and cottage industries that signify decentralisation of the economy were also given due weightage in the scheme. Besides, the co-operatives were assigned a dignified place in the scheme of things. The resolution adopted by the Congress at its Amritsar Session in 1956 further streamlined the emphasis on the decentralised system of economy with the development of small scale and village industries and recognised their "vital role". Particularly as an alternative to statism, the Party reiterated its resolve for increasing co-operativisation of industry, commerce and agriculture. Co-operatives in the decentralised sector of the industrial economy and different types of agrarian co-operatives to serve "various purposes" and "to suit different conditions" were advocated. That apart, workers' participation in industrial enterprises so as to slacken the rigour of centralised ownership and control, found favour with the Party.

The Congress Party's commitment to the Gandhian socialist technique of decentralisation and co-operativisation reached its climax when it met at Bhubaneswar to define its pledge of Democratic socialism. While the Party reiterated once again its dedication to the cause of Socialistic Pattern of Society and acknowledged the role of social ownership and control in such scheme, it also reiterated as categorically and unwaveringly: "Decentralised industry on small and cottage scale will continue to occupy an important place in the economy of the country."<sup>101</sup>

While the Public Sector was expected to play a "strategic and predominant role in the field of trade and industry" the co-operative system of ownership and organisation was to occupy "an increasingly important place specially in the field of agriculture, small-scale and processing industries and retail

trade.”<sup>102</sup> Particularly the Party advocated co-operativisation of uneconomic holdings and the goal of land reform was defined as “co-operative rural economy based on the village community and on voluntary association.” Co-operatives in the processing industries like rice-mill and marketing of agricultural products were also advocated. As the Party resolved : “Co-operation should play a major role in providing credit, supplies and market facilities to the agriculturists.”<sup>103</sup>

### GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND SOCIALIST EXPERIMENTS IN INDIA

The experiments in socialism embarked upon by the Party in power since independence, specially since the Avadi Resolution on the Socialistic Pattern of Society, have acknowledged the importance of some Gandhian socialist values and particularly the importance of small-scale village and cottage industries and co-operatives in the scheme of things. The Second Five Year Plan while assigning the state heavy responsibilities “and a dominant role” in shaping the socialist economy and preventing concentration of wealth and income, did not devise a monolithic type of economy with concentration of economic power in the hands of the state. On the other hand the plan contemplated a diversified system of economy embracing the private and co-operative sectors along with a dominant state sector. The private sector and the co-operative sector were meant to prevent centralisation and bureaucratisation and consequent distortion of socialist economy. Even in the sphere of state sector the objective was to introduce diversification, decentralisation of control and democratisation of policy decisions. As the Second Plan went to say : “It is neither necessary nor desirable that the economy should become a monolithic type of organisation, offering little play for experimentation, either as to forms or as to modes of functioning. Nor should expansion of the public sector mean centralisation of decision making, and of exercise of authority. In fact, the aim should be to secure an appropriate devolution of functions and to ensure to public enterprises, the fullest freedom to operate within a framework of broad directives or rules of the



game.’’<sup>104</sup>

The emphasis of the Second Plan on village and small industries followed as a direct corollary of its objective of decentralisation of economy. As it is categorically stated in the Second Plan, the village and small industries were intended apart from other reasons “to provide the basis for the structure of an essentially decentralised society.”<sup>105</sup> Such small units widely scattered and diffused in the length and breadth of the country were thus expected to provide counterweight to a centralised system of social ownership or a statist system of socialist economy.

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 that still rules the roost in the sphere of socialist reconstruction of India, encompasses a mixed economy where both public and private sectors have their assigned roles to play. Under the Resolution, the Private Sector is assigned a role not to restrain the progress towards socialisation of economy; the real objective lies in restraining the domineering position of the state in the public sector that deprives the socialist system of its central values. Besides even if the private sector is allowed a comparatively dignified place in the system, the real emphasis is not so much on the private sector as on the co-operative sector. The private sector has to be gradually and progressively converted into the co-operative sector. Hence in order to secure progressive realisation of a Socialistic Pattern of Society, the Industrial Policy Resolution aspires “to expand the public sector and to build up a large and growing co-operative sector.”<sup>106</sup> As it further reiterates : “The principle of co-operation should be applied wherever possible and a steadily increasing proportion of the activities of the private sector developed along co-operative lines.”<sup>107</sup>

The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 and the Second Five Year Plan while assigning an important place to village and small industries expected that they should be organised on co-operative lines as far as possible. Producers’ co-operatives, marketing co-operatives, and co-operatives for the supply of raw materials to village and small industries were preferred to independent artisan system of production, purchase and sale.<sup>108</sup> Besides co-operative farming also found favour in the Second

Plan.<sup>109</sup> The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 enjoins upon the state to offer "special assistance" to "enterprises organised on co-operative lines for industrial and agricultural purposes."<sup>110</sup>

This policy of decentralised economy, existence of private sector by the side of the public sector, diffusion of small and village industries throughout the country and reliance on co-operatives, was continued during subsequent plans as a part of the strategy for the establishment of the Socialistic Pattern of Society. While the domineering role of the state in the field of socialist transformation was taken for granted and the state was expected to act as the pace-setter of the economy, the Third Five Year Plan recounted: "The Five Year Plans enlarge the scope of individual initiative as well as for co-operative and corporate effort."<sup>111</sup> Hence in the Third Five Year Plan development of small-scale and village industries and proliferation of co-operatives were treated as parts of the grand strategy for socialist transformation. The "crucial role" of village and small-scale industries in the matter of dispersion of wealth and prosperity, "more equitable distribution of the national income" and generation of an egalitarian society was recognised.<sup>112</sup> Besides its importance as a counterweight against centralisation of socialist economy and as "an essential and continuing element in the national economy" were also emphasised.

The Plan also assigned a significant place to the co-operatives in the strategy for socialist transformation of the economy. But what is more significant is that it went beyond the scheme of organisation of various types of co-operatives as potent and profitable economic devices. The real and the most ambitious object was that a system of co-operatives shall act as a check against evolution of statist system of socialist economy. Hence the Plan categorically stated: "Basically its purpose is to evolve a scheme of co-operative community organisation."<sup>113</sup>

In the Fourth Five Year Plan the objective behind the scheme of village and small industries as defined was also to "promote decentralisation and dispersal of industries".<sup>114</sup> The roles of the private sector and the co-operative sector were also emphasised in the Fourth Plan, along with the domineering role of the Public Sector. The co-operative sector was not

only afforded ample opportunities to expand, the policy was one of making the system "viable and efficient". Agricultural co-operatives, co-operative marketing, co-operative agricultural processing industries, co-operative storage facilities, co-operatives for handling of agricultural inputs and consumers' co-operatives occupied almost a central position in the scheme of things. Hence while allowing the public sector to dominate in the field of "further expansion in high priority fields to fill the gaps in the industrial structure" the Fourth Plan adopted a policy under which "Co-operatives and private sectors are envisaged to make significant contribution to industrial development in all other fields."<sup>115</sup>

What is still more significant, the chapter on "Objectives of Planned Development" of the Third Five Year Plan that categorically defined the perspective of planned development in the country and the Socialistic Pattern of Society, while highlighting the need for providing the masses "the opportunity to lead a good life", underlined the importance of "moral and ethical values"<sup>116</sup>, that shall endow "good life" a real sense and meaning. Jawaharlal Nehru rewriting the draft "Objectives of Planned Development", recalled the Indian cultural tradition, the Gandhian synthesis of moral and ethical values of ancient Indian heritage and the scientific technological spirit of modern time, and cherished the aspiration of treading the Gandhian track in formulating and implementing the schemes of planned development and Socialistic Pattern of Society.<sup>117</sup> Hence while setting the broad outline of the scheme of removal of poverty and economic inequality, concentration of wealth and economic power and dispersion of wealth and opportunities the "Objectives" finally concluded "ultimately it is the development of the human being and the human personality that counts."<sup>118</sup>

That apart, the "Objectives of Planned Development" also acknowledged the importance of Gandhian values like peaceful and democratic method and popular participation in the implementation of the plan that shall ultimately usher in a Socialistic Pattern of Society.<sup>119</sup> Such strategy, it was felt, shall hold aloft the ideal of real free and equal society. Hence it was said: 'It is a basic premise in India's Five Year Plan that through democracy and widespread public participation,

development along socialist lines will secure rapid economic growth and expansion of employment, reduction of disparities in income and wealth, prevention of concentration of economic power and creation of the values and attitudes of a free and equal society.”<sup>120</sup>

To sum up although at one time Gandhi was considered as a drag in respect of India's march towards socialism and his socio-economic doctrine was considered as apologies for conservatism, reformism and reaction, the Indian socialist thought and practices have of late discovered a great deal of relevance in the Gandhian socialist thought. To be more precise, the Gandhian emphasis on the balanced and integrated development of each individual with an overtone of moral and spiritual regeneration, purity of means as that of the end and particularly the plea for adoption of non-violent technique, and a decentralised system of economy to subserve the socialist goal, have not only found favour with the rationalist, and libertarian socialist thinkers of India; they make these the principal planks of their socialist thought and strategy and such principles constitute the warp and the woof of the modern Indian socialist thought. Hence as Acharya Narendra Dev has very appropriately observed : “Under the impact of Gandhiji, Indian socialists realised the importance of purity of means, non-violent technique of struggle and decentralised democracy and economy.”<sup>121</sup>

Besides, the mild attempt at socialist transformation of India has also proceeded on Gandhian lines. Jawaharlal Nehru who had borne the brunt of the burden in the matter of transformation of Indian economy on socialist lines himself acknowledged : “I would call ourselves the authentic Gandhian era and the policies and philosophy which we seek to implement are the policies and philosophy taught to us by Gandhiji.”<sup>122</sup>

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## CHAPTER 10

# GANDHIAN SOCIALISM IN THE SPECTRUM OF MODERN SOCIALIST THOUGHT

That certain important traits of Gandhian socialism are visible in the socialist doctrine and practices of India does by no means prove the flair of Indian socialists to drink profusely from the fountain of Gandhian socialist thought and their wilful obeisance to Gandhian socialist values. Gandhi was detested and derided, defamed and dishonoured during his life-time by most of his followers and more so by the socialist elements among them and hence it is far from truth to say that close association of most of the socialist thinkers of India with Gandhi, and their participation in the Gandhian political campaigns have lent the modern Indian socialist thought a Gandhian approach. If Indian socialist thought and movement are exhibiting some interest and discovering some sense and meaning in Gandhian socialist values, it is only a part of the overall world movement in that direction.

Of late there has been a revival of interest in Gandhi, Gandhism and Gandhian values that at one time appeared to be dogmatic, irrational, unscientific, inscrutable and inexplicable. Not only is the potency of the Gandhian technique of non-violence acknowledged by a world studded with nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons; Gandhian social philosophy has been resurrected from condemnation and denunciation that had once been showered upon it the world over. People all over the world have started exhibiting interest in his theory of non-

violence, Satyagraha, indissoluble relationship between means and end, and above all the Gandhian philosophy and economic theory. Hence instead of being dubbed as a bourgeois philosopher and a reactionary, Gandhi is being projected at present as a "Social revolutionary", "a revolutionary personality" and an "anarchist" although a gentle anarchist. Gandhi who at one time was dubbed as a reactionary and a lackey of the bourgeoisie by the Soviet leaders has recently been portrayed as an arch-enemy of the bourgeois system. As E. N. Komarov, the Soviet scholar has observed : "Mahatma Gandhi sincerely sympathised with the working people and the oppressed. He dreamt of their social emancipation. He condemned bourgeois society as an exploiting system."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi has become so much acceptable to the left, because of the fact that his social philosophy and socialist thought contain certain elements of rationalism and pragmatism and some perennial values that transcend the narrow geographical frontiers and cut across ethnic, religious and cultural differences and these can be cherished by all rationalist and pragmatic socialist thinkers in all climes and at all times. Besides, this is so because Gandhian socialism is a happy blending and a magnificent synthesis of socialist values and strategies, that are both old and new, and it contains different shades in the spectrum of socialist thought beginning from Utopianism upto the socialist philosophy of the New Left and the ultra left represented by the Chinese Cultural Revolutionists and Cohn Bendits with Scientific Socialism, Radical Humanism and New Humanism intervening in between.

### RADICAL UTOPIANISM

The co-authors of Scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, branded their forerunners in the realm of socialist thought and particularly Saint Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier as Utopian Socialists. They no doubt acknowledged in such forerunners certain elements of protest against the bourgeois society, its inherent exploitative nature and class antagonism, and certain revolutionary fervour. But they branded them, utopian visionaries because, (1) "they want to improve the

condition of every member of society even that of the most favoured", (2) "the habitually appeal to society at large without distinction of class, nay by preference to ruling class" for the creation of a just and egalitarian society, (3) "they reject all political and specially all revolutionary action; they wish to attain their ends by peaceful means", (4) "they endeavour by small experiments necessarily doomed to failure and by the force of example to pave the way for the new social Gospel", (5) "the practical measures proposed in them—such as the abolition of the distinction between town and country, of the family, of the carrying on of industries for the private individuals and of the wage system, the proclamation of social harmony, the conversion of the State into a mere superintendence of production" and above all (6) for their proposals for the "disappearance of class antagonism" and "fantastic standing apart from the contest."<sup>2</sup> Judged by such standards Gandhian socialism may be termed as utopian.

Although Gandhi took pride in proclaiming himself a labourer, a farmer and a weaver, and throughout his life was a champion of the underdogs, the lowliest and the lost in the society, his socialistic ideal was a Sarvodaya social order, that comprehends all round welfare of all members of the society, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. While advocating elimination of an exploitative socio-economic order based on privileges he shrank from and rejected outright the need for a revolutionary upsurge and violent uprising for engendering such a social order. Instead, he held aloft on the staff of non-violence and peaceful technique the banner of appeal and moral education, persuasion and conversion of the privileged class so that the latter by practising self-restraint and self-sacrifice shall act as catalytic agents of socialist transformation. Through this peaceful and non-violent technique of persuasion and conversion, he desired to extract the privileges enjoyed by the privileged class and utilise it for the good of the underdogs thereby deadening class antagonism and class conflict. His Phoenix Settlement, the Tolstoy Farm and the Ashrams at Sabarmati or Sevagram were miniature socialist colonies designed almost on the lines conceived by the Utopian Socialists. Gandhian socialism also comprehends extension

of family, broadening and widening of its periphery, territorial diffusion of economic enterprises, dispersion of their ownership and diminution of the functions of the state in the matter of socialist transformation.

To be more specific, Gandhian socialism contains features that have close resemblance with the socialist philosophy of the Utopian Socialists like Charles Fourier, Robert Owen and Proudhon. The identity of outlook is so much striking that one may well imagine that Gandhian socialist outlook assumed its form and content under the influence of Utopian Socialists.

Charles Fourier who felt disillusioned with the mechanised and centralised system of production and commercialisation of economy that constitute the core of modern civilisation, was primarily a man of religion, imbued with profound faith in God and man. If he felt that "every person engaged in an industry is at war with the mass and malevolent toward it from personal interest . . . It is thus that in civilised industry, every individual is in intentional war against the masses", he discovered the solution in an associative life or Phalanx and creation of Phalansteres. The Phalansteres were to be small homogeneous communities consisting of between 1600 to 1800 people and 5000 acres of land erected not on the economic principle of large-scale organisation of industry and proliferation of commerce, but on the socio-economic principle of creation of self-sufficient, consumption-oriented, small scale, craft based agro-industrial complexes. Intensive garden-cultivation, small-scale raising of stock and poultry were to constitute the base of the system. As G.D.H. Cole has observed : "Fourier was not in the least interested in technology : he disliked large scale production, mechanisation and centralisation in all their forms. He believed in small communities as best for meeting the real needs of small men."<sup>3</sup>

As Asoka Mehta has observed, "Against industry, he favoured agriculture, against large-scale-factories, crafts associatively organised, against domination by experts, the democracy of multipurpose individuals."<sup>4</sup> In such "Phalansteres" although absolute equality was not to be maintained in respect of payment of wages and level of consumption, yet

Fourier was a believer in need-based minimum wage. The "Phalansteres" were to be instituted not through state initiative; he relied instead on the philanthropy of the propertied people and the privileged classes.

Robert Owen, himself a successful industrialist, during the early part of his career, was not so much enamoured of large-scale organisation of economic enterprises and wanted instead, small, agro-industrial colonies in the model of New Harmony. He realised that economic prosperity is the product of working classes.<sup>5</sup> He realised too that the working class the real creator of wealth was being robbed and deceived by the owners of capital assets; yet the solution he devised is not one of accentuation of hatred against and conflict with the propertied class. On the contrary he reposed his faith on the benevolence of the members of his class like himself and co-operative effort of the workers and producers. He was an advocate and a builder of communities or villages of co-operation, inspired by the spirit of harmony, instead of conflict. "All these individuals now living are the suffering victims of the accursed system, and all are objects of pity; you will therefore effect this great and glorious revolution" said Owen, "without if possible, inflicting individual evil—without bloodshed, violence or evil of any kind, merely by an overwhelming moral influence which influence individuals, and nations will speedily perceive the uselessness and folly of attempting to resist."<sup>6</sup> Hence Owens pet ideal was a decentralised, self-governing, craft and agriculture oriented co-operatively organised, small communities created on the basis of voluntarism instead of compulsion and love and harmony instead of hatred and conflict.

Proudhon, the Utopian Socialist worshipping in the shrine of liberty and justice was an enemy of centralisation of power and concentration of authority. Liberty and justice for him meant dispersion and diffusion of authority. As he said : "The ideal republic is a positive anarchy. It is neither liberty subordinated to order nor liberty imprisoned in order. It is liberty free from all its shackles, superstitions, prejudices, sophistries, usury, authority : it is reciprocal liberty and not limited liberty, liberty is not the daughter but the mother of order."<sup>7</sup> He was the first of the anarchist thinkers who so

much despised centralisation of power and authority that he detested all forms of state and Government. As he said, "We do not admit of the government of man by man any more than the exploitation of man by man." As he further said, "Who even lays his hands on me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant; and I declare him my enemy."<sup>8</sup>

Hence liberty and justice implied for him a decentralised system of economy and political system. He sensed the enemy of liberty and justice as much in the centralised system of large-scale production as in a centralised system of state and government. Liberty and justice acquire meaning and significance only in the context of organisation of economy and the social order on the principle of localism and federalism. Hence the ideal system of socio-economic order that can ensure liberty and justice is one consisting of small communities of agriculturists and craftsmen pursuing their vocation without outside interference. As G.D.H. Cole has written : "Proudhon always thought of society and of its problems mainly in terms of small-scale economic activity and of small social groups. He had indeed in mind mainly peasant families cultivating their small farms or individual craftsmen carrying on small-scale production . . . ."<sup>9</sup> Thus Proudhon discovered in small communities of craftsmen, peasants and shopkeepers the essence of socialist society.

The Utopian Socialists therefore were impassioned egalitarians who reposed their faith in men, smaller self-sufficient communities, diminution of the powers of the state, decentralisation of economic and political system, self-government in economic enterprises, agrarian-cum-craft-oriented complexes, and above all on voluntaristic instead of compulsive nature of socialist transformation. Gandhi subscribed almost to all the major premises of these Utopian Socialists. Like Fourier and Owen he pinned his faith in men. Like all the three, Gandhi as a socialist was apprehensive of large-scale organisation of the economy and too much of mechanisation and concentration. Like all the three he was a believer in smaller communities, self-sufficient and self-governed. Agriculture and craft were the mainstay of his Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm, Sabarmati Ashram or the Ashram at Wardha and in this

respect they resemble the Phalanstere of Fourier, the New Harmony of Owen and the small self-sufficient and the self-governed agro-industrial community conceived by Proudhon. Owen's co operative enterprises found favour with Gandhi and he advocated agriculture, craft and consumer's co-operatives. Like Proudhon's Gandhian socialism is also libertarian and it rejects outright the domineering role of the state in the matter of socialist transformation.

But inspite of such identity of outlook, Gandhian socialism differs from the socialism of the Utopian Socialists in some vital respects. Both Fourier and Proudhon were not advocates of absolute economic equality. Fourier not only allowed enjoyment of unearned incomes derived from possession of capital, he was even prepared to pay special rewards for skill, responsibility and managerial capacity. Thus Fourier was an advocate of differential wage based on quality and quantity of work. Proudhon was also favourably disposed towards the principle of unequal wage to different categories of labourers. He considered it quite in consonance with the principle of reciprocal justice. He wanted abolition not of inequality of wage but inequality arising out of privilege or monopoly. Saint Simon another celebrated Utopian socialist also believed in unequal reward corresponding to real difference in the quality of work.

But Gandhi like the early communist Cabet was a believer in need-based wage and thus abolition of all inequalities in the matter of enjoyment of privileges from the society on the basis of quantity or quality of work or differential physical or mental capacity. In this respect Gandhian socialist ideal also resembles the ultimate Marxian communist ideal of "from each according to his capacity, to each according to his need" rather than the ideals of the Utopian Socialists.

Besides whereas Gandhi saw eye to eye with Fourier, Robert Owen and Proudhon in respect of economic and political decentralisation and agriculture and craft-based smaller communities, he differed from Saint Simon another celebrated Utopian Socialist who was an advocate of use of science in industry and a believer in large scale organisation. But in respect of his concept of Bread Labour, Gandhi's idea



is identical with that of Saint Simon. As G.D.H. Cole has observed about Saint Simon : "At the very root of his doctrine was the notion that the essential task and duty of man was labour and that in the new social order no respect would be paid to any man save in proportion to his service through labour to the community."<sup>10</sup>

According to Saint Simon labour was a source of power, and dignity and prestige shall go to those who perform labour. Besides property and privileges, according to him, were mere passport for rendering service to the community. Thus the Gandhian and Saint Simonian concept of labour converge. But Gandhi went a step ahead when he advocated "no labour, no bread" and put a premium on bodily labour or manual labour. Whereas Saint Simon, assigned a place of prime importance to intellectual labourers i.e. scientists, techno-crafts and managerial personnel, Gandhian socialism elevates sky high, the status of farmers and craftsmen.

Gandhian socialist thought has also a great deal of resemblance with egalitarian philosophy of many more thinkers other than the much-acclaimed Utopian Socialists who preceded the advent of Scientific Socialism. Robert de Lamennais realised that concentration of power in the hands of the state is the very definition of tyranny. Hence for the emancipation of the underdogs, abolition of private property and their concentration in the hands of the state is not a worthy and defensible strategy. Abolition of private property and their concentration in the hands of the state shall not lead to freedom and fraternity or a classless society but to the "reestablishment of castes"—the caste of administrative hierarchy that Milovan Djilas has branded as the New Class of bureaucrats. The real solution therefore lies not in the abolition of private property but in their dispersal and universalisation. The Gandhian scepticism about too much of reliance on the state for socialist transformation thus resembles the concept of Lamennais. That apart the "True Socialists" of Germany like Bruno Bauer, Hess and Grun on whom the co-authors of Scientific Socialism also lavished their denunciation, firmly adhered to certain ethical and moral principles in the matter of selection of the socialist strategy. They believed that adoption of any

method that is morally and ethically unsound shall pervert and distort the end in view however noble they may be. Accordingly they held at a discount the violent technique for the sake of socialist transformation. They apprehended that adoption of such violent techniques for socialist transformation may give rise to authoritarianism and totalitarianism and thus defeat the very purpose of socialism. When reference is made to Gandhian emphasis on the nature of the means as that of the end it will appear that Gandhi was perhaps speaking the language of these German "True Socialists".

Thus Gandhian socialist thought has great deal of resemblance with Utopian Socialism and for that matter Gandhi may be dubbed as a Utopian Socialist.

But since the days of Marx and Engels and specially since the appearance of the Manifesto of the Communist Party the term Utopian Socialism instead of being treated as a tribute is often used as a term of contempt and reproach. The Utopian Socialists are usually looked down upon as a cluster of well-intentioned but impractical dreamers, who while, aspiring for a golden age have no clue to it. While hoping to reach the Socialist El Dorado, they sailed in a rough storm-tossed sea without a chart and without the Mariners' Compass. Any attempt to include Gandhian socialism in the rank of Utopian socialism is to condemn Gandhi to such denunciation.

Although Gandhian socialism exhibits certain traits of Utopian Socialism it is something different and superior to Utopian Socialism. If Gandhian socialism is to be branded utopian at all, it will be perhaps more accurate to brand it Radical Utopianism. Gandhian socialism has no doubt all the characteristics for which Marx and Engels denounced Utopian Socialism. Gandhi no doubt had uppermost in his mind, the "welfare of all" that embraces the welfare and prosperity even of the propertied and the privileged class and endeavours to achieve socialist revolution by way of peaceful technique and appeal to the good sense of the ruling class. That necessarily implies abjuring the violent technique. Through the institution of socialist colonies in miniature like the Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm, the Sabarmati Ashram and the Ashram at Sevagram he expected that egalitarian

spirit shall spread from such centres and influence the world outside.

Yet Gandhian utopianism is of a militant and radical type. Although he was an apostle of non-violence he was never a pacifist but ever a revolutionary personality. Non-violence for him was never a coward's refuge for inaction but a brave man's technique to wage a civilised and humanised revolt against exploitation and injustice. He was never content with a blueprint for a more rational and scientific social system nor did he confine his activities to a mere elaboration of a vision or a dream; he was earnest to see his scheme through and get his utopia realised. Hence as Geoffrey Ashe has observed : "The theory of non-violence with all its branches was rooted in his vision of humanity's quest, its need to shake off entangling greeds and hatreds, so as to move through love nearer to the divine Truth. That process had no limit. He became therefore a supreme and quintessential revolutionary, an apostle of endless transfiguration."<sup>11</sup> Wilfred Wellock has equally passionately termed him as "the most complete and profound social revolutionary of our time."<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi not only advocated egalitarian reconstruction of the society; he waged a permanent revolution during his life time to give shape to his vision. His entire life was not only an "experiment with truth" but also full of experiments in struggle and revolt against an exploitative and inequalitarian socio-economic order. While aspiring to change the contours of the existing exploitative socio-economic order through the application of the technique of love and non-violence he staked his life in the struggle and ultimately embraced martyrdom.

Hence while adopting the technique of persuasion and conversion, love and non-violence, civil, civilised and humanised technique, for the ushering in of an egalitarian revolution in the country, he steeled his resolve to offer a determined fight to the exploitative system, and its upholders and defenders—the privileged class. While advocating, trusteeship of the rich, whether capitalists or landlords, and toleration of their privileges, he not only prescribed very tough qualifications which the Trustees were expected to fulfil; on the non fulfilment of

such qualifications, Gandhi prescribed their dislodgement from the position of Trusteeship and confiscation of their property.

Although Gandhi advocated an atmosphere of goodwill and harmony in the industrial world—between the capitalists and the wage-earners—he advocated equally passionately militant mass action by the workers to get their just grievances redeemed. He did not stop short there; he even spearheaded on occasions their revolt, and staked his own life on the occasion of the Ahmedabad Textile Mill, Workers' strike. He not only made the elimination of caste system and establishment of a caste-less society along with a classless society a principal plank of his socialist picture of society; he also waged a permanent struggle against the caste system that was corroding the vitals of Indian society and staked his life so many times on such issues. His Non-Co-operation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and the Quit India Movement were no doubt peaceful and non-violent revolts against the British, bourgeois, imperialist, and exploitative system; yet they were as militant as any other revolution. Like Marx or Engels he not only elaborated his theory, during his life time he spearheaded all the mass actions in India and lent them a sense of militancy. He was not only "an ardent advocate of revolt", he himself was an impassioned revolutionary. But the only thing that can be said about his theory of revolt is that he was a revolutionary in the mould of Cabet, the early communist thinker of modern times who while advocating revolution insisted that it must be brought about by arguments and conviction and not by force. Cabet wrote : "If I held a revolution in my hand I should keep that hand closed even if that should mean my death in exile." With necessary modification to suit Gandhian non-violent technique, it is equally true of Gandhi. What was true of revolution in case of Cabet is true of violent revolution in case of Gandhi. But Gandhi would always unleash revolution from his hand if the revolution is non-violent in nature without being afraid of the cross or the scaffold. Thus Gandhi may be termed as a gentle revolutionary and a humanised revolutionary. Some people are of opinion that true answer to communism can be found "in the Gandhian revolution which is a complete revolution."<sup>13</sup>

Hence although Gandhian socialism comes closer to Utopian Socialism in some respects and particularly because of its emphasis on peaceful and non-violent technique and mitigation of class antagonism and class conflict, it is more than ordinary Utopian Socialism and may more accurately be branded as Radical Utopianism or Militant Utopianism.

### GANDHIAN SOCIALISM MORE SCIENTIFIC THAN "SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM"

If Gandhian socialism is more than mere utopianism and more radical and militant than Utopian Socialism, it is equally more scientific than the Scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels. Although Gandhian socialist ideas originated, developed, and matured independent of Marxian influences and during the course of its development and maturity acquired traits that are distinct and different from Marxism, yet Gandhi shared certain identity of outlook with Marx. The theory of Bread Labour of Gandhi looks like a Gandhian interpretation of the Marxian Labour Theory of Value. Not only Gandhi like Marx made labour the source of all material values and the supreme source of all economic prosperity; like Marx he did not distinguish between qualities of labour. Gandhi's views on mechanical production, large-scale industrialisation and modern civilisation are almost in the lines indicated by Marx: Yet Gandhian socialism differs from Marxian socialism in some fundamental respects that are considered, the very cornerstones of Marxian Scientific Socialism. But where Gandhi differed from Marx, he made an improvement over the latter, and the future is on his side.

Engels while stigmatising his forerunners in the realm of socialist thought as Utopian Socialists and their egalitarian philosophy as *Utopian Socialism*, took the credit that the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, a joint product of himself and Karl Marx, marked the advent of Scientific Socialism. He held that their predecessors were no doubt well-meaning persons who inspired by the desire of amelioration of the lot of the exploited class of the society visualised a moral, rational, just and egalitarian social order, yet their egalitarian philosophy

was more in the nature of pious wishes that stemmed from their romanticism and faith in individual human effort rather than a body of systematic and scientific doctrines indicating the inevitability of socialism. He claimed that the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* heralded the advent of Scientific Socialism because the philosophy contained therein presaged the inevitability of socialism or the emergence of socialism from the womb of capitalism or the ultimate and inevitable development of capitalism into socialism. With this discovery of the working mechanism of capitalist development and the inevitability of socialism, socialism became as per his claim a science, or a science of socialism was born.

As the co-authors of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* contended, polarisation of wealth and poverty under capitalism, recurring alternation of the economy between boom and depression, and consequent deprivation, misery, and degradation of the proletariat, in face of higher rate and quantity of production and accumulation of products, shall ultimately produce the pre-conditions for the overthrow of capitalism and ultimate enthronement of socialism. The capitalist system of production not only prepares the way and forges the weapons that bring about its downfall; it also brings into existence men who wield such weapon—the Proletariat. Hence as the co-authors of *Scientific Socialism* contended, “What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable”<sup>14</sup>

But the co-authors of *Scientific Socialism* while chiding their forerunners as utopians and forecasting inevitability of socialism made their own position vulnerable by advocating revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat for bringing about socialist transformation. Their stirring call and exhortation to the proletariat “working men of all countries, unite” compromises the very essence of inevitability of socialism. Hence as M. N. Roy has observed : “At its very conception Marxism was self-contradictory. If the decay and disappearance of any social system was inevitable, a violent revolution for its overthrow was palpably unwarranted. Conversely if the change had to be brought about by force it was not inevitable. Be-

cause it could be prevented by the use of superior force.”<sup>15</sup> Thus the romanticism of Marxism, its faith in the ability of human action and conscious human effort to bring about socialistic transformation, compromises and contradicts the rationalism and scientific bias of Marxian Scientific Socialism.

Marx and Engels realised the futility of the concept of historical inevitability of socialism, when they acknowledged the significance of the historic role of the proletariat to bring about socialist transformation. They started with the much advertised premise of its historical inevitability and thus gave their doctrine, the status of a systematic, coherent and scientific system; but they ended by making their system incoherent, suffering from internal contradictions. Any system suffering from incoherence and internal contradictions can hardly be termed a scientific system. That ultimately became the lot of Scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels.

But although Gandhi was not a system builder or a systematic political thinker his scheme of socio-economic reforms is much more coherent and consistent. Although he was basically a man of religion he did never relapse into fatalism that is generally associated with religiosity. His socialism is a consistent and coherent system being a product of his basic faith in non-violence. It is a scheme to rid the society of economic violence committed through capitalistic exploitation. Instead of visualising inevitability of socialism he pinned his faith in conscious human effort for the reform of the individual and reform of the social system through the reform of the former. This Gandhian faith in the individual and his romanticism, appear more rationalistic and thus scientific than the inconsistent and incoherent system of Marx and Engels. His faith in non-violence, non-violent and non-exploitative social system, peaceful technique of persuasion and conversion of the propertied section of the society and in extreme circumstances, non-violent non-cooperation of the masses with the privileged section of the society to attain the socialist objective, form together a coherent and consistent system. Consequently the Gandhian theory of socialism is far more scientific than the *Scientific Socialism* of Marx and Engels.

Besides, one important plank of *Scientific Socialism* is its

economic determinism or economic interpretation of history. The purpose behind such economic interpretation of history was not to highlight the importance of economic factors and economic considerations in the socialist society of the future; on the other hand the real intention of the architects of *Scientific Socialism* was to indicate the deficiencies and the mundane nature of all hitherto existing societies. This is evident from the Marxian condemnation of the materialistic overtone of the bourgeois society. As the co-authors of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* have written : "The bourgeoisie . . . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest than 'callous cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour of chivalrous enthusiasm of philistine sentimentalism in the icy water of egotistical calculation"<sup>16</sup> They continued, "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to, with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers."<sup>17</sup>

But while Marx and Engels condemned the bourgeois economic system because of its economic determinism, they committed the blunder of visualising a system, under which economic considerations and economic systems shall play a dominant role. The ten-point programme elaborated in the *Manifesto* acknowledges the pre-eminence of economic factors and the restructuring of the economic system, in the matter of shaping the socialist society of the future. Except the first part of point 10, the emphasis of the programme is on economic reforms. Accordingly it has been observed : "Scientific Socialists have concentrated all their efforts on the transformation of the economic structure of the society. The social change from capitalism to socialism is according to them only a change in the economic basis of society."<sup>18</sup>

The primary appeal of socialism is moral and ethical. It is basically a revolt against the vulgar view of life and society, a view of redressing the balance of an exploitative society. Of course economic solutions like providing the basic economic minimum, a progressively higher standard of life, greater amenities to the common man and reduction of economic



inequalities are essential for bringing about a moral and just social order but as it has been observed : "Once material are substituted for human values, the claims of socialism, as a superior economic system, become of doubtful validity."<sup>19</sup> But the authors of *Scientific Socialism* while cherishing a lofty vision of moral and just reordering of society based on egalitarianism and devoid of exploitation, combined their moralism with gross materialism. Gandhi on the other hand tried to redeem socialism of such materialistic overtone. Of course Gandhi did not completely overlook improvement of the material conditions of the masses under socialism; yet he was not lured away by the aspirations of material progress so as to lose sight of the real progress of man to a state of fraternity and sharing of prosperity in a world, characterised by expanding avenues for his balanced growth. Accordingly he said : "Indeed the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses. The only statement that has to be examined is whether it can be laid down as a law of universal application that material advancement means moral progress."<sup>20</sup>

While the *Scientific Socialists* pitched their hope on material prosperity, Gandhi prescribes the panacea of renunciation of wealth by the privileged section of the society bearing in mind the poverty of the masses, and practice of self-restraint in every sphere of life. This objective of renunciation of material wealth, is not only conducive to the improvement of the lot of the under-privileged; it is equally necessary, felt Gandhi, for the regeneration of the rich both morally and spiritually. As he said : "If we will but cleanse our houses, our palaces, and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality we can offer battle to any combinations of hostile forces, without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and the irrevocable promise is that every thing will be added with us."<sup>21</sup>

It has been observed : "A socialist philosophy that takes its stand today on materialism ceases to be scientific."<sup>22</sup> If Gandhi's socialist thought steers clear of gross materialism, while not neglecting material prosperity altogether, and lays

equal or even greater emphasis on the moral and ethical regeneration of man it is perhaps more scientific a system than the *Scientific Socialism* of Marx and Engels.

Marx and Engels comprehended the vision of "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free-development of all."<sup>23</sup> But the process for the formation of such an association is one that not only encompasses adoption of violence, but also concentration of political and economic power, "in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation." The programme as elaborated by them presupposes a system of "political supremacy" of the proletariat and an economic system, that rests on the elimination of private initiative and enterprise, "extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state" "centralisation of credit in the hands of the state" and "centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state."<sup>24</sup> The "political supremacy" of the proletariat that Marx and Engels had in mind is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Marxists or the Scientific Socialists of Soviet Union marched ahead with this idea so as to develop this "political supremacy" of the proletariat into the dictatorship of the Communist Party or the elite of the Party. The authors of Scientific Socialism defended the Dictatorship of the Proletariat on the ground that the violent seizure of political authority and economic power by the Proletariat shall whip up counter-violence of the dispossessed bourgeoisie which can only be overwhelmed and contained by superior violence of the Proletariat that assumes the form of dictatorship. They somehow believed that Dictatorship of the Proletariat and concentration of economic power in the hands of the Proletariat organised and operating in a dictatorial fashion shall ensure free development of each that is the gateway of Socialism.

But such emphasis on concentration of political power defeats the very purpose of socialism and makes *Scientific Socialism* of Marx and Engels unscientific. While the ultimate objective is an egalitarian society which will provide opportunities to all for their free development, the dictatorship of the proletariat that will be as ruthless, as aggressive and as

oppressive as any other form of dictatorship, will normally deprive the individuals of all avenues for free and unrestrained development. How to reconcile the ultimate objective of blossoming of each human personality i.e., the Marxian notion of "free development of each" with a totalitarian system? As E.F.M. Durbin has argued, the dictatorship of the Proletariat "is not a necessary instrument in the creation of social justice," nor "the best, nor the quickest nor even a possible road to the socialist goal." An authoritarian government may formulate and execute spectacular programmes of socio-economic change in the direction of socialism just because there is no effective opposition to it. "But the one thing they cannot do without which all the other achievements may become dust and ashes, in the mouths of ordinary men and women is to establish emotional security or social justice. They cannot do these things because they govern by terror and not by law, by force and not by consent."<sup>25</sup>

Herbert Marcuse of the New Left critical of the totalitarian system of Government and centralisation of political control, has said: 'For the administrative individual pluralistic administration is far better than total administration. One institution might protect him against the other; one organisation might mitigate the impact of the other; possibilities of escape and redress can be calculated. The rule of law no matter, how restricted is still infinitely safer than the rule above or without law.'<sup>26</sup> Hence centralisation of economic and political power is the very negation of human development and defeats the very purpose of socialism.

The authors of "Scientific Socialism" themselves perhaps apprehended a decline of human values and human personality under the stress of Dictatorship of the Proletariat and accordingly expressed the pious hope that the Proletarian dictatorship having swept away the condition for the existence of class antagonism "will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."<sup>27</sup> But they did not suggest the method by which dictatorship shall dissolve itself and no dictatorship in history has ever paved the way for its own decline.

The system of concentration of economic power in the hands of the totalitarian state, visualised by the Scientific

Socialists also militates against the very spirit of socialism. Too much of centralisation of control over production and centralisation of economic power are the very antithesis of creativity of man. Under the supreme direction and control of the state and of the party bureaucracy, the individual producers,—the workers whether in the field or in factory—lose their identity as creative entities with will power or aspirations of their own. They become cogs in the machine of productive mechanism of the state centrally controlled and centrally directed. “The worker becomes a robot whose chief functions were to act as a cog during peace and a maniac during war. The machine robotised the workers body in work, while the press, the wireless, and the cinema robotised his mind in play. The development of mass emotionalism, through the cult of professional sports, dog and horse racing, sentimental jazz and crooning and equally sentimental screen shows carried the process of dehumanisation to a new low level.”<sup>28</sup>

The *Scientific Socialism* of Marx and Engels emanating from their ethical consideration, ultimately succeeds only in apotheosising the state, the political and party bureaucracy and the economic machine, and anaesthetizing the individual. This spells the very negation of liberation of man or the “free development of each” that constitutes the very essence of socialism. But the Gandhian technique of socialist transformation assumes a form of political and economic reorganisation that “facilitates full development of each, serves the real objective of socialism and thus makes the system more coherent, consistent and therefore more scientific than Scientific Socialism.”

Gandhi was not only an apostle of non-violence; his opposition to violence made him a bitter opponent of concentration of political and economic power that perpetrates violence. He rejected adoption of violent technique for socialist transformation as much from practical as from ethical consideration. No doubt violent technique was inconsistent with his doctrine of means end relationship, that a noble end like socialism can not be attained by an ignoble means like violence. But what was equally important from Gandhian

stand-point of means-end relationship is that violent technique when adopted for socialist transformation will unleash a spate of counter-violence. Marx and Engels while formulating their philosophy of socialism and advocating adoption of violent technique for the attainment of the same took cognisance of such a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence and to contain the same, devised the technique of concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the State. In order to contain the reign of violence and counter-violence they devised a system of super-violence or reign of terror perpetrated by the state in the guise of Dictatorship of the Proletariat. But Gandhi dreaded the state because it represents violence in a concentrated and organised form and the association of the Proletariat with it would be an insufficient and unsafe shield to protect it against degeneration into a system of totalitarian tyranny if absolute economic power is combined with absolute political power. Gandhi apprehended that if for the sake of socialist transformation, such a system of absolutism is created it shall throw to the four winds all human values and socialist values, nullify the highest socialist objective of 'free development of each' and thus compromise the very essence of socialism. Partly because of such apprehensions, Gandhi from the very beginning cut the root of such tyranny or dictatorial regime through rejection of the technique of violence which may engender counter-violence and thus necessitate a dictatorship—may be a system of Proletarian dictatorship.

Hence the essence of Gandhian technique for the creation of an egalitarian society is not the creation of an absolute political authority but divining of a system that will restrain the authority which compromises all human and socialist values. While defining Swaraj, he said : "Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."<sup>29</sup>

The need for restraining the political authority so that human faculties shall be released and "free development of each"

shall become possible, led Gandhi to advocate a system of decentralised political and economic system. Accordingly Gandhi said : "If India is to evolve along non-violent lines it will have to decentralise many things." The ideal system of political and economic organisation conceived by Gandhi is one of decentralised, self-sufficient and self-governing village communities where the individual—although a socially conscious individual—constitutes the centre of the system. Such a system shall provide opportunities to the individuals for the free play of their inherent faculties and full development of their personalities. The decentralised system of economy where creativity of the individual gets full scope for self-expression becomes a true liberating force. Thus "free-development of each" paving the way for the "free development of all" will thereby be ensured. Socialist values shall have better chance of blossoming in such a system.

Hence if concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the state by compromising the individuality of man and restraining the free development of their inherent faculties militates against the very basis of socialism thereby making the *Scientific Socialism* of Marx and Engels an incoherent, inconsistent and unscientific dogma, mitigation of such errors under Gandhian scheme of things through a decentralised political and economic system makes the latter more scientific than the former. Hence although judged by Marxian standards, Gandhi may at best be branded as a Utopian Socialist his socialist thought is more scientific than the *Scientific Socialism* of its acclaimed prophets.

### GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND "NEW HUMANISM"

If Gandhian socialism is an improvement over Marxian socialism, more consistent, more coherent and more scientific than Scientific Socialism, it laid the way for and led the revolt of New Humanists. The New Humanists like M. N. Roy as a matter of fact only broadened the channel of revolt dug by Gandhi.

M. N. Roy the founder of the school of New Humanism was not only an ardent advocate of *Scientific Socialism*; during

his youth, with the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, violent overthrow of the bourgeois regime, establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and economic regeneration of the masses, he foresaw the rise of what Sydney and Beatrice Webb so optimistically envisioned a New Civilisation. Roy was not only expectant that a New Civilisation was looming large on the horizon; he swam downstream in the current of revolution accepting for himself the historic role of a socialist revolutionary spreading the socialist revolution in the under-developed countries, suffering under the heels of imperialistic domination. But he felt disillusioned with the course of developments in the Communist countries which in the guise of experiments in *Scientific Socialism*, perpetrated moral, ethical and spiritual degeneration of man. As he has observed : "Heralded as the salvation of the civilised world, tortured and tormented by capitalist exploitation, communism in practice has come to be a spectre terrifying not only the bourgeoisie, it is causing grave misgivings even amongst the progressive forces of the modern world. . . . ."<sup>30</sup>

But what is most important and interesting is that Roy's analysis of the problems and the solutions prescribed by him follow the path laid by Gandhi. Roy felt that the post-revolutionary developments in Russia were not reassuring. The bondage of one type of class-ridden society had been replaced by another. As per Marxian prescription pre-history did not end and history did not commence with the advent of the Revolution; nor even traces of the movement towards the realisation of the utopia was visible. The Proletarian revolution to which the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* so optimistically looked forward, did not inaugurate the perspective of a new civilisation or a higher civilisation. Not only the new civilisation had not dawned; there was no prospect of its dawning in the near future.

Roy felt that what the Proletarian revolution had succeeded in ushering in, is not a new civilisation but a totalitarian regime under which all aspects of human life had been rigorously regimented. The new system had generated an era of "political domination, cultural regimentation and economic slavery."<sup>31</sup> The human creativeness in the intellectual, moral and spiritual

domain had suffered a set-back. Roy branded it as a miscarriage of the revolution a gigantic tragedy. "When at last the era of proletarian revolution appeared to begin, it turned out to be a period of triumphant reaction—an era of counter-revolution. That was indeed an irony of history."<sup>32</sup>

Roy's analysis of the causes of this misdirection of the Proletarian revolution and emergence of a totalitarian regime is almost Gandhian in approach. He realised that hopes have been belied and realisation of the promised utopia had receded not because there was anything wrong in the vision; the method applied for the realisation of the dream of a liberated human being was misconceived. The philosophy of amoralism and the technique of violence, regimentation and deprivation of individual freedom—political and economic, intellectual and spiritual—were the real villains of the peace. Roy's identity of outlook with Gandhi is evident from his emphasis on the morally and ethically sanctioned technique. As he says: "It is very doubtful if a moral object can ever be attained by immoral means. In critical moments when larger issues are involved and greater things are at stake some temporary compromise in behaviour may be permissible. But when practices repugnant to ethical principle and traditional human values are stabilised as the permanent features of the revolutionary regime, the means defeat the end. Therefore Communist political practice has not taken the world not even the working-class anywhere near a new order of freedom and social justice. On the contrary it has plunged the army of revolution, proletarian as well as non-proletarian in an intellectual confusion, spiritual chaos, emotional frustration and a general demoralisation."<sup>33</sup> As he further says: "The theory and practice of dictatorship even as the means to a laudable end are repugnant."<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the emphasis on ethical and moral approaches to the problem of social regeneration and creation of a new civilisation, Roy like Gandhi is also critical of undue emphasis on political and economic reorganisation and particularly concentration of political and economic power. Concentration of political power in the hands of the proletariat means for all practical purposes concentration of power in the party



bureaucracy which leads to totalitarianism and loss of human freedom and dignity that are the very essence of any free society. Abolition of private property and its concentration in the hands of the state, realised Roy “do not by themselves end exploitation of labour nor lead to an equal distribution of wealth.” For all practical purposes transfer of ownership from private hands to the state does not universalise ownership or socialise it. Thereby ownership is simply transferred from one class viz., the bourgeoisie to another class—the proletariat. Besides the ownership is not transferred from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat as a class; the elite of the Party, a handful of individuals in the name of the proletariat, really own it and exploit the rest for their private ends. As Roy observed: “In reality, however, the ownership, still remains ‘private’ because it is vested in one class, not the entire society.”<sup>35</sup>

Above all, Roy felt like Gandhi that the Soviet political and economic system failed to move in the direction of a New Civilisation or the utopia because from the very beginning the emphasis was misplaced. The free society of the future instead of being conceived in terms of psychological, social, intellectual and spiritual freedom was understood in the sense of economic freedom and that too only in the sense of freedom in the sphere of creature comforts. Neglect of all other freedoms that promote real and balanced development of man and creation of a free society, is the real bane of the communist system according to Roy.

Roy’s vision of the new civilisation like that of Gandhi is libertarian in nature. Freedom is the very cornerstone of his concept of new civilisation. “Civilisation” according to him “is capable of setting individual men and women free, place them on the road to freedom at any rate.”<sup>36</sup> Thus according to Roy the very essence of civilisation is the extent of opportunity it provides to the individuals for the enlargement of their freedom. As Roy felt, the real progress of man towards civilisation consists in the quest for freedom. This quest for freedom represents continuation of the struggle for existence from the mere biological to a still higher level of spiritual, ethical, mental and moral development. Society is a creation of man, a group effort “in quest of freedom” and this quest

for freedom "is the basic urge of all social advancement". The function of any social organisation consists in seeking for the individual the maximum measure of freedom. The viability of any social, political or economic group effort depends upon the extent of freedom it ensures. Hence as Roy observed : "The sum total of freedom actually enjoyed by its members individually is the measure of the liberating or progressive significance of any social order."<sup>37</sup>

If freedom is the essence of civilisation and the very basis of all social systems, any new civilisation in order to serve its real purpose, shall have to promote human freedom. But Roy's concept of freedom is almost identical with Gandhian concept of freedom. Freedom presupposes "progressive elimination of all the factors—physical, social, psychological—which obstruct the unfolding of man's rational, moral and creative faculties." Thus freedom is a question of comprehensive, balanced and all-round development of man, his mental, moral and spiritual besides material development. As Roy said : "In modern society, an individual to be free must not only be able to enjoy economic sufficiency and security, but live in a social psychological atmosphere free from cultural regimentation and helpful to the development of his intellectual and other human potentialities."<sup>38</sup>

But Roy believed like Gandhi that such a balanced development of man, catering to the ultimate objective of freedom, is inconceivable through a system of slavery. "It is absurd" said Roy "to argue that negation of freedom is the road to freedom." His approach like that of Gandhi became ethical and he believed that such high objective i.e. proliferation of human freedom is unattainable through method that is ethically indefensible and morally unsound. Accordingly he rejected outright the adoption of violent and dictatorial technique and regimentation in any form. He said like Gandhi : "Politics cannot be divorced from ethics without jeopardising the cherished ideal of freedom. It is an empirical truth that immoral means necessarily corrupt the end."<sup>39</sup> In any new civilisation founded on freedom, "Man must . . . be the measure of all things" and the sovereignty of the individual must be recognised.

Roy's prescription for the creation of such a new civilisation that shall keep freedom at the centre of the system is almost Gandhian. He realised like Gandhi the inadequacy of economic and political reform leading to centralisation of authority. Instead of relying on a centralised system of economy and totalitarian system of government, like Gandhi he reposed his faith in a decentralised economic system and a direct type of democracy commencing from the grassroots. As he said : "A new world of freedom will not result automatically from an economic reorganisation of society. Nor does freedom necessarily follow from the capture of political power by a party claiming to represent the oppressed and the exploited classes."<sup>40</sup> Mere abolition of private property, its transfer to and management by the State, or in other words mere accentuation of state ownership, instead of extending the horizon of freedom will broaden and deepen the scope of totalitarianism and dictatorship.

If man shall be regarded as the "archtype of society" if the concepts of "sovereign individual" and free society are to be nourished, and man's status will be better than a "mere cog in the wheel," Roy like Gandhi felt that the economic and the political systems should be reorganised with small groups forming the core of the political system and small-scale production, production for use instead of production for profit forming the base of the economic system. Speaking about the political system of the new civilisation consisting of "small groups", Roy said that they "will be small replicas of the state composed of them. Being small, they can not crush the individual. On the other hand in a small corporate unit, the potentialities of man can have greater freedom to develop."<sup>41</sup> The Radical Democratic Party formed by Roy accepted as its economic objective, an economic system "based on production for use and distribution with reference to human needs." The Radical Democratic Party under Roy's inspiration reiterated its faith in 1948 on a system of economy that "will consist of a network of consumers', and producers' co-operatives".

Thus Roy's new Humanism appears to be a replica of Gandhian socialist philosophy. The repentant Marxist revolutionary has ultimately come round the Gandhian approach

to the problem of socialist reconstruction and his New Humanism appears to be indistinguishable from Gandhian socialism.

## GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

Jawaharlal Nehru, who during his youth discovered in *Scientific Socialism* a solution to the problems of an inequalitarian society, in course of time, felt disillusioned with its emphasis on violence and gradually drifted towards *Scientific Humanism*. But the Scientific Humanism of Jawaharlal is essentially indistinguishable from the non-violent socialism of Gandhi's conception.

During the early days of his youth Jawaharlal was powerfully influenced by Marxism "A study of Marx and Lenin, produced a powerful effect on my mind" says Jawaharlal, "and helped me to see history and current affairs in a new light. The long chain of history and of social development appeared to have some meaning, some sequence, and the future lost some of its obscurity."<sup>42</sup> That apart the Marxian dialectic of continuous change by evolution as well as leap through action and interaction, cause and effect, thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis appealed to him most.

Besides, the socio-economic changes effected in Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution "were also tremendously impressive" for him. As Jawaharlal felt : "I had no doubt that the Soviet Revolution had advanced human society by a great leap and had lit a bright flame, which could not be smothered and that it had laid the foundations for that new civilisation towards which the world could advance."<sup>43</sup>

But gradually Jawaharlal realised the inadequacy of *Scientific Socialism*, particularly its emphasis on material prosperity at the expense of other human values like freedom and its amorality in respect of the choice of technique as evidenced in communist countries. As he says : "Its suppression of individual freedom brings about powerful reactions. Its contempt for what might be called the moral and spiritual side of life not only ignores something that is basic in man, but also deprives human behaviour of standards and values. Its unfortunate association with violence encourages a certain evil tendency in human beings."<sup>44</sup>

Besides Jawaharlal realised like Gandhi that the essence of a virile civilisation lies not in material prosperity or conquest of outer-space but in the full blossoming of the human personality and cultivation of their inner-grace. It is not mere lessening of economic and social inequalities that constitutes the core of the socialist system or any egalitarian civilisation of the future; rather it involves all-round development of individual personality that embraces along with others ethical, moral and spiritual emancipation of man. As Jawaharlal realised: "The real problems for me remain problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of a proper balancing of an individual's inner and outer life, of an adjustment of the relations between individuals and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of man."<sup>45</sup>

In such a context, Jawaharlal considered undue emphasis of communism or *Scientific Socialism* on violent technique, material prosperity at the expense of ethical and moral values, and loss of human freedom, as "wholly unscientific, unreasonable and uncivilised". Hence he switched over from *Scientific Socialism* to *Scientific Humanism* that according to him holds out a better and a surer promise of a creative civilisation and a free-society.

Jawaharlal felt that although the modern age is an age of science and technology, and scientific spirit with its emphasis on matter and material prosperity dominate the modern cultural ethos, equally important are ethical, social, altruistic and humanitarian spirit that inspire the thought-process of the individual, his private and social conduct and above all the spirit of the age. Thus the dual ideals dominating the modern age are "humanism and scientific spirit".<sup>46</sup> These two ideals are not antithetical and there is no scope for antagonism or conflict between the two; rather as he observed: "There is a growing synthesis between humanism and the scientific spirit resulting in a kind of Scientific Humanism."<sup>47</sup>

Hence Jawaharlal discovered that the spirit of the age is *Scientific Humanism*. But what is the essence of Jawaharlal's concept of *Scientific Humanism* that constitutes the spirit of the age? As Jawaharlal said: "Humanity is its god and social

service its religion.”<sup>48</sup> Hence a humanitarian and societarian approach inspires the thought-process of the individuals and form the warp and the woof of this age of Scientific Humanism. Accordingly Jawaharlal observed : “The modern mind that is to say the better type of the modern mind is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism of social betterment.”<sup>49</sup>

Hence inspite of certain amount of selfishness, greed, ego-tism, anti-social tendencies and demonstration of a spirit of conflict and social violence that characterise human conduct, man is basically a social being, capable of living for others and making life of others pleasant and comfortable at his own expense. As Jawaharlal believed : “Inspite of innumerable failings, man, throughout the ages, has sacrificed his life and all he held dear for an ideal, for truth, for faith, for country and honour. That ideal may change, but that capacity for self-sacrifice continues and because of that, much may be forgiven to man and it is impossible to lose hope for him . . . . . Whatever gods there be, there is something god-like in man, as there is also something of the devil in him.”<sup>50</sup>

This Scientific Humanism brought Jawaharlal closer to Gandhian socialism. His faith in man and his capacity to sacrifice for the sake of social good, prompted him to reject like Gandhi, the violent technique. Rather in the context of this faith in man and his capacity to live beyond one’s selfishness, violent technique for socialist transformation becomes redundant. While advocating *Scientific Humanism*, Jawaharlal became an advocate of peaceful technique of social change and subscribed to the Gandhian doctrine of indissoluble relationship between the end and the means. Hence he said : “The most vital lesson that Gandhi taught us or made us remember afresh was the importance of means. Ends were never enough by themselves for the ends were shaped by the means that led to them. If there is any basic truth in this principle and in his method of working them, we also have to build on the foundations he laid down.”<sup>51</sup>

Besides, Jawaharlal’s Scientific Humanism also prompted him to discern like Gandhi the inadequacies of gross materialistic approach to socialism and accept instead a more rationalistic

and ethical one. Under its impact he realised that mere scientific and technological progress may not and shall not serve the sublime objective of blossoming of the humanity of man and the proliferation of *Scientific Humanism*. Rather like Gandhi he felt that reliance on too much of material affluence may lead to mechanisation and robotisation of human personality that is the very antithesis of human progress or *Scientific Humanism*. Hence while attaching supreme consideration to the development of the freedom of the individual and other human faculties he said : "Perhaps the most potent factor in diminishing the value of individual personality is mechanisation and automation."<sup>52</sup>

That apart, if ethical, social, altruistic and humanitarian values constitute the essence of *Scientific Humanism*, over-emphasis on material development and prosperity may create a state of imbalance in the development of man and militate against the spirit of the age that is *Scientific Humanism*. Hence the materialism of the age of *Scientific Humanism* must be inspired by spiritual, ethical, humanitarian and sociitarian spirit. Accordingly Jawaharlal said : "In the final analysis what is required is the wisdom how to live and make the most of life oneself and for the community. Economic policy can no longer be considered as some interpretation of Nature's law apart from human considerations or moral issues."<sup>53</sup>

Hence the *Scientific Humanism* of Jawaharlal is as much concerned with the quality and depth of human personality as with its material prosperity. It is not only with material affluence but also with spiritual and ethical excellences that *Scientific Humanism* is concerned. Thus it desires to forge a synthesis between materialism and spiritualism, scientific, industrial and technological progress and ethical, moral and humanitarian resurgence. Jawaharlal's problem was : "Can we combine the progress of science and technology with this progress of the mind and spirit also ? We can not be untrue to science, because that represents the basic facts of life today. Still less can we be untrue to those essential principles for which India has stood in the past throughout the ages. Let us then pursue our path to industrial progress with all our strength and vigour and at the same time remember that material

riches without toleration and compassion and wisdom may well turn to dust and ashes.”<sup>54</sup> Thus Jawaharlal’s *Scientific Humanism*, traverses the road laid by Gandhi.

Apart from Jawaharlal, Albert Einstein, the celebrated scientist of the Twentieth Century who represented the better type of modern mind as conceived by Jawaharlal and who apart from his devotion to science, had unflinching faith in humanitarian and social values and thus conformed to the mould of Scientific Humanism of Jawaharlal, almost subscribed to some of the socialist values cherished by Gandhi. As much an impassioned humanitarian as an ardent lover of science and scientific values, who realised that the “human society is passing through a crisis”, that “its stability has been gravely shattered”, discovered the source of the evil from which humanity suffers in the “economic anarchy of the capitalist society as it exists today” and prescribed the remedy of a socialist reconstruction of the society and the economic order.<sup>55</sup> But he conceived of socialism more in the sense of resurgence of ethical and moral values than material prosperity and welfare. As he said, “Socialism is directed towards a social ethical end.” Since socialism is primarily an ethical objective, mere material affluence can not succeed in delivering the socialist goods. Since he almost identified human progress and progress of civilisation with socialism and conceived socialism in the sense of an ethical and moral upsurge, he said : “I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward.”<sup>56</sup> Laying categorical emphasis on moral and spiritual values he was of the opinion that “the fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength today.”<sup>57</sup>

Although a life-long worshipper in the shrine of science, he was conscious of its inadequacies to effect a rational and egalitarian reconstruction of society. Mere application of science and technology may bring about a prosperous society considered from material angle but it may not deliver a really living and creative civilisation. As he said : “We should be on our guard not to over-estimate science and scientific methods, when it is a question of human problems.”<sup>58</sup>

Einstein was not only of the opinion that moral and spiri-



tual values and not material affluence constitute the core of socialist civilisation; he also like Gandhi laid adequate emphasis on the value of renunciation. He almost like Gandhi believed that a saner and safer world and an egalitarian society can be reconstructed on the basis of renunciation practised by the possessing class. As he said : "The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation everywhere."<sup>59</sup>

Thus Albert Einstein, a dedicated man of science and an impassioned humanist who conformed to the mould of *Scientific Humanism* of Jawaharlal, also subscribed to some of the basic values of Gandhian socialism.

## GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND THE NEW LEFT

The socialist doctrine of Gandhi is so much scientific in nature, and rationalistic in approach that the modern Marxist intellectuals of the left who are termed in modern radical jargon as the *New Left* also subscribe to many of the ideas that are the specialities of Gandhian socialism. Special mention may be made of Herbert Marcuse, Jean Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon.

### (a) Gandhi & Marcuse

Herbert Marcuse although unlike Gandhi not only condones but also freely advocated application of violence against the establishment, conservatism and the status quo or violence from below or violence of the oppressed, like Gandhi conceives of a system of socialism erected not on totalitarianism but on freedom. His socialism like that of Gandhi is libertarian and comprehends a multi-faceted and integrated development of man. Like Gandhi, Marcuse emphasises on extension of ethical and spiritual dimension of man under socialism and a changeover from a quantitative to a qualitative civilisation.

Marcuse like Marx is concerned with the creation of a society where free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. But like Gandhi, Marcuse realises that mere material affluence of a technological civilisation can not ensure free and unfettered development of each individual and thus emergence of a right type of socialist society. On the other hand he feels that when the socialist system of produc-

tion imitates the capitalist system in respect of technological viability and creation of an economy of mass-production and mass-consumption, it defeats the very purpose of socialism.

Marcuse acknowledges like Gandhi that the technological civilisation was devised in order to minimise human drudgery and misery, reduce fear and insecurity and convey man "unto a yet uncharted realm of freedom, beyond necessity". As he says the technological revolution was devised so that the "very structure of human existence would be altered; the individual would be liberated from the work world's imposing upon him alien needs and alien possibilities. The individual would be his own."<sup>60</sup> It was expected that through such technological revolution the productive apparatus "could be organised and directed towards the satisfaction of vital needs" and the centralised control that it shall generate shall "not prevent individual autonomy but render it possible."<sup>61</sup> In effect, the technological civilisation has no doubt produced an economy of affluence, but in course of creation of an economy of affluence it has distorted the real objective, i.e. liberation of man and his free and unfettered development, and has undermined the system of values. The system feels Marcuse defeats the real purpose, i.e. liberation of man, in two ways.

On the one hand, multiplication of varieties of goods and commodities and creation of an economically affluent society no doubt secure for the individual, under the technological civilisation, freedom from want, scarcity and insecurity; but individuals under such a civilisation "recognise themselves in their commodities, they find their soul in their automobiles, hi-fi-set, split level home, kitchen equipment."<sup>62</sup> Men in their mad rush for procurement and enjoyment of such goods, mistake the false needs as true ones and regard satisfaction of their desire for goods as the *summum bonum* of life. Hence whereas there is vast expansion of the material dimension of man's life he loses in respect of his moral and inner dimension that constantly and perpetually shrink, in inverse proportion with the expansion in his material dimension. The natural human, spiritual, intellectual and emotional faculties get jammed. As Marcuse views it: "The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces 'sell' or impose

the social system as a whole. The means of mass transportation and communication, the commodities of lodging, food and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry, carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers, more or less to the producers and through the latter to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate, they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood."<sup>63</sup>

Thus according to Marcuse there develops a "One Dimensional Man," only with a material dimension. There is suppression of innate faculties of the individual and unfettered development of his integrated personality. Freedom of thought, speech and conscience are subordinated to the satisfaction of material desires. As he says: "Independence of thought, autonomy and the right to political opposition are being deprived of their basic critical function in a society which seems increasingly capable of satisfying the needs of individuals through the way in which it is organised."<sup>64</sup> There also emerges "a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behaviour".

On the other hand, the technological civilisation perpetuates through its efficiency a system under which "the scope of society's domination over the individual is immeasurably greater than ever before". Because of its capacity for "delivering the goods" on an increasingly large scale it applies the technique of "scientific conquest of nature for the scientific conquest of man". As Marcuse feels, under the technological civilisation "the productive apparatus tends to become totalitarian". It not only determines the social needs but also the needs and aspirations of the individual. It obliterates the distinction between private and public existence, and individual and social needs. Hence "the technological society is a system of domination."<sup>65</sup>

Thus Marcuse like Gandhi has discovered that man in the modern world under a highly developed industrialised society and a technological civilisation has been bogged down to a system of domination. Like Gandhi he realises that in his search for freedom and liberation from misery, man only

succeeds in creating an industrially and technologically developed civilisation where "domination over the individual is immeasurably greater than ever before" and where "productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs and faculties".<sup>66</sup> Like Gandhi he feels that the industrially and technologically developed society in the name of ensuring "freedom from toil and domination" creates "a whole system of domination."<sup>67</sup>

Speaking specifically about the socialist system Marcuse feels that socialism due to its passion for competitive co-existence with the capitalist system, particularly through a policy of mass production, mass distribution and adoption of the apparatus of technological civilisation, defeats the very basic purpose of socialism. As he has observed: "The development of socialism thus continues to be deflected from its original goals."<sup>68</sup> As a true and libertarian Marxist—like a libertarian Gandhite - Marcuse becomes an advocate of a system that shall break the servitude of man and liberate his creative faculties from the state of suffocation from which it suffers under the heels of technological civilisation. Marcuse's primary concern as a socialist strategist therefore is "liberation" and he dreams of "building a realm of freedom which is not that of the present: liberation also from the liberties of exploitative order—a liberation which must precede the construction of a free society."<sup>69</sup> Hence Marcuse like Gandhi is an advocate of "enlargement of the realm of freedom". The problem before him is: "How can he (man) satisfy his needs without hurting himself, without reproducing, through his aspirations and satisfactions, his dependence on an exploitative apparatus which, in satisfying his needs perpetuates his servitude?"<sup>70</sup>

Marcuse's socialism like that of Gandhi is so much libertarian that he says: "What is good for society and for the state is not necessarily good for the individual." Besides, he is equally critical of a system of freedom as defined and interpreted by the state. The Soviet system is taken to task by him because the system has instrumentalised freedom for the sake of securing political objective. He takes exception to the system under which, the "individual acts and thinks morally

in so far as he promotes in his action and thoughts the objectives and values set by society". He is critical of the system under which "ethical value is 'external' to any specific individual action or thought, the latter being instruments for attaining an ethical goal which is that of society." <sup>71</sup>

Marcuse the Marxist is therefore in search of a socialist civilisation where free development of each shall be the condition for the free development of all. He makes a fervent plea like Gandhi for a qualitative change in the life of man instead of a quantitative change in respect of the extent and varieties of goods consumed. As Marcuse views it "freedom from the rule of merchandise over man is a precondition of freedom." <sup>72</sup> Marcuse's emphasis therefore is on an "essentially new quality of life". As he advocates : "Qualitative change must occur in the needs, in the infrastructure of man." <sup>73</sup>

If Marcuse has become an advocate of qualitative change, he realises it equally well that 'such a qualitatively new mode of existence can never be envisaged as the mere by-product of economic and political changes, as the more or less spontaneous effect of the new institutions which constitute the necessary pre-requisite.' <sup>74</sup> Hence he like Gandhi has banked upon the evolution of a "new type of man" and development of a "new sensibility". Gandhi, for example, for the erection of his system of socialism, relied upon the resurgence of the finer sensibilities of man, i.e. love for fellow beings, non-violence, lack of greed and possessiveness and renunciation. Marcuse likewise while emphasising on freedom has discounted the freedom of man or his right of self-determination or autonomy in the sense of "right to race his automobile, to handle his power-tools, to buy a gun, to communicate to mass audience his opinion no matter how ignorant, how aggressive it may be" and relies on the finer human sensibility of creation of "instinctual barrier against cruelty, brutality, ugliness". <sup>75</sup> Further, the socialist society of the future shall be shaped by "men and women who have the good conscience of being human, tender, sensuous. . ." <sup>76</sup> "The imagination of such men and women" according to Marcuse "shall make the process of production a process of creation." <sup>77</sup> Such individuals must be inspired by an "aesthetic ethos".

Besides, the principles of work and construction in the

socialist society, according to Marcuse, involves redirection of labour time to creation of such aesthetic environments. As he views it : "Socially necessary labour would be diverted to the construction of an aesthetic rather than repressive environment, to parks and gardens, rather than highways and parking plots, to the creation of area of withdrawal, rather than massive fund and relaxation. Such redistribution of socially necessary labour (time) incompatible with any society governed by the profit and performance Principle, would gradually alter the society in all its dimensions—it would mean the ascent of the Aesthetic Principle as Form of the Reality Principle."<sup>78</sup>

Above all Marcuse like Gandhi has emphasised on individual's moral worth, cultivation of his personal values, and their manifestation in the society. As he says : "Morality in the form of an efficient organisation of values guiding individual behaviour inside and outside the plant or office assumes decisive significance as an integral part of progressing rationalisation."<sup>79</sup>

Besides, Marcuse's socialism like that of Gandhi is concerned not only with self-determination or autonomy of the individual—their freedom, and liberation of their faculties from a system of oppression and domination—and development of their integrated personality; the new sensibility that forms the core of Marcuse's men and women who would work for the emergence of socialist society shall accept as its ideal "global elimination of poverty and toil".<sup>80</sup> As Marcuse has said : "The form of freedom is not merely self-determination, and self-realisation, but rather, the determination and realisation of goals which enhance, protect and unite life on earth."<sup>81</sup> Thus the egalitarian Marxist intellectual Herbert Marcuse converges on the position held by Gandhi in respect of the nature and content of egalitarian society.

Marcuse, although by conviction a Marxist, has put the Soviet system in the dock. But what is very much significant, the main planks of his indictment are almost Gandhian in nature. Marcuse acknowledges that the ultimate Soviet objective like that of the West is freedom, justice and unfettered development of the individual. The individual must be free from external determination, so that he becomes free for self-

responsible action or behaviour with the ultimate objective of unfoldment of his potentialities and fulfilment of his personality. As he says: "Working with Marxist theory, Soviet ethics claims to unite on a scientific basis, values and facts, ideal and reality, the particular interest of the individual and the general interest of society, even of mankind as a whole. Moreover Soviet ethical philosophy claims to be capable of demonstrating the attitude, behaviour, and practice, which alone will bring about freedom, and a human existence for all."<sup>82</sup> But Marcuse feels that the ultimate humanitarian object of the Soviet system has become distorted because of its undue emphasis on economic freedom. The undue emphasis on economic security, i.e. freedom from wants, and making political and intellectual freedom direct concomitant and corollary of freedom from wants, clamp down upon the individual an all-enveloping state, make the state a super-ego and above all lead to absolutism, totalitarianism and deflection of all higher humanitarian and socialist values. Not only the rights of the individual become the concern of the state; "The state which as an independent power controls the realm of necessity also controls the personal aspirations, objectives and values of the individual."<sup>83</sup>

Marcuse, critical of a system of technological control over individual, finds the Soviet system with its fusion of economic and political power, untenable, from the stand-point of promotion of socialist values and particularly freedom and liberation needed for the development of multi-faceted faculties of man. He discovers that "the principles of socialist economy were made into an instrument of domination."<sup>84</sup> While the humanist values attached to the Soviet socialist system "became ritualised into ideology the values attached to the means, i.e. the values of total industrialisation became the really governing values".<sup>85</sup> He discovers that the end has receded the means having become everything: "Socialist morality thus succumbs to industrial morality."<sup>86</sup> Under such a system of fusion of technological and political control there is corrosion of liberal and humanist values and subordination of the autonomous individual and his inalienable rights. Under political organisation of technological rationality, there is accentuation of man's

alienation and enslavement. The traditional liberties and human values succumb to regimentation of employment, control of movement, health insurance, censorship etc. Hence as Marcuse observes : "The realm of legitimate unfreedom, was vastly extended and the surrender of the natural liberties of the individual was openly and methodically enforced in spheres of the human existence which remained sacrosanct in the west."<sup>87</sup> Thus Marcuse like Gandhi considers fusion of technological and political rationality repressive of individual liberty and happiness.

Marcuse's indictment of the Soviet system is also due to continuation of a system of oppression, rigidity, strict discipline and a type of authoritarian morality—that was characteristic of the early post-Revolutionary and Stalinist era—even after the problems that warranted their application had evaporated. Hence he says : "If the elimination of libertarian ethics belongs to the requirements of primary industrialisation, why does the struggle against these ethics continue after the creation of the industrial base, with growing productivity and social wealth ?"<sup>88</sup> Further he says : "It is an apparent paradox that Soviet ethical philosophy continues, to taboo . . . .the libertarian ideas, of the revolutionary period at a stage when their realisation seems more logical than at the stage of extreme scarcity and weakness "<sup>89</sup>

Thus Marcuse's Marxism is libertarian and anti-authoritarian. Socialism to be real must not only hold out the promise of a state of freedom to all individuals in the distant future, the path for such a rosy future should be paved with the absence of regimentation and domination and proliferation of an atmosphere of freedom and liberation that shall promote balanced and all round development of all individuals. With such a philosophical outlook, Marcuse like Gandhi looks with contempt at a system of domination perpetrated by political, economic and military bureaucracy. He is equally critical of the dominance of the intelligentsia, qualified specialists, technocrats or managerial class. The dominance of a party in the matter of socialist reconstruction is also an anathema for Marcuse in the context of a system of libertarian socialism.



Hence, Marcuse like Gandhi has become an advocate of libertarianism and freedom and a system of socialism, of which individual initiative and creativity and proliferation of human value and multi-faceted development of the individual form the cornerstones. His ideal has become one of combining "the need for 'primary' disciplining of the labouring classes, with the need for individual initiative and responsibility—the standardised compliance of the human tool, with the intelligent imagination of the engineer."<sup>90</sup>

Marcuse, although like Marx and the Marxists, views society organically and conceives of a socialist society where individual freedoms and rights are to be understood in the context of societal good and welfare, and individual aspirations to be identified with public ideology, like Gandhi he is opposed to forging of such identification through violence and terror. That, he felt, shall defeat the very purpose of socialism—the liberation of man. Hence he says : "The costs for the individual and for society are incomparably greater if it is accomplished by terror, and the difference may well be that between, life and death."<sup>91</sup>

Speaking about socialist movement in the Third World, Marcuse is of opinion that the predominantly agrarian proletariat kept in a state of abject material and mental privation, may depend on militant leadership, and military insurrection aided by guerrilla warfare; yet as he has observed : "It is the great chance and at the same time the terrible danger for the forces of liberation."<sup>92</sup>

If Marcuse like Gandhi discovers danger in the application of military and violent techniques for socialist transformation, he like Gandhi also emphasises on the nature of the means for the attainment of the end. Although he is not as much committed to purity of means or non-violent technique as Gandhi, yet, to a very large extent he subscribes to the view of an indissoluble relationship between the end and the means and is sentimentally and conscientiously opposed to promotion of liberation through a system of oppression and suppression. Hence he says : "This end must indeed appear in the means to attain it, that is to say, in the strategy of those who within the existing society, work for the new one. If the socialist

relationships of production are to be a new way of life, a new form of life, then their existential quality must show forth, anticipated and demonstrated in the fight for their realisation. Exploitation in all its forms must have disappeared from this fight : from the work relationships among the fighters as well as from their individual relationships. Understanding, tenderness towards each other, the instinctual consciousness of that which is evil, false, the heritage of oppression, would then testify to the authenticity of the rebellion.”<sup>93</sup>

Further like Gandhi, Marcuse realises the need for democratisation not only of the ownership of the economy but also their control. The hard core of party, political, and economic bureaucracy must be pricked so that the socialist system assumes a real popular bias. Accordingly he has suggested : “A privileged authoritarian bureaucracy must be refined and renewed and kept open to ascent from below.”

Further he advocates increasing cultural, along with material compensation, for the underlying population. Since Marcuse is vehemently opposed to perpetuation of a repressive bureaucracy and advocates a socialist revolution that shall struggle “to eschew the bureaucratic administration of socialism”. He like Gandhi discovers a solution in a system of decentralised economy. Accordingly he inveighs as much against the “centralised bureaucratic communist” system as against the centralised system in the democratic world. As his ideal stands : “The initiative shifts to small groups, widely diffused, with a high degree of autonomy, mobility, flexibility.”<sup>94</sup>

Further Marcuse like Gandhi is an advocate of perpetual revolt and advocates intellectual and spiritual anarchism directed against a system of bureaucratic domination perpetrated in the name of socialist liberation. As he says : “Released for the construction of the initial, revolutionary institutions, the anti-repressive sensibility allergic to domination would militate against prolongation of the ‘First Phase’ that is the authoritarian bureaucratic development of the productive forces.”<sup>95</sup>

Thus Marcuse a representative of the New Left subscribes to many values that form the cornerstones of Gandhian socialism.

**(b) Gandhi and Jean Paul Sartre**

Jean Paul Sartre, the Marxist intellectual and existentialist philosopher, like Marx and his Marxist brethren, conceives of an egalitarian society devoid of class distinction and class division. He visualises a society "that must have liquidated its classes, that is to say the principle of division."<sup>98</sup> He envisions a social structure where the lowest stratum of the class-ridden and privilege-ridden society, i.e. the Proletariat, or the working classes shall occupy a position of status and dignity.

But Sartre like Gandhi makes the individual the centre of the socialist structure of his conception. If he is a champion of the Proletariat, his Proletariat is not an integrated, synthesised chemically comingled mass, devoid of individual sensibilities, and personal worth and dignity; on the other hand like Gandhi Sartre conceives of a Proletariat consisting no doubt of socially conscious but at the same time self-conscious individuals conscious of their own worth and dignity and their finer senses and sensibilities. While advocating regeneration, reordering and renovation of the society and its reconstruction, the ultimate objective before Sartre is one of recreation of manhood in the Proletariat, its reliving, its intellectual and moral resurrection and rehabilitation. Hence while thinking of social regeneration in the direction of a class-less society with the Proletariat at the apex of power he like Gandhi makes "free blossoming of each" the symbol of his banner of revolt against the existing class and privilege-ridden society.

Sartre therefore, while like Marx is a champion of the Proletariat as a class, is concerned like Gandhi with the class of Proletariat consisting of individuals. He expresses his concern for the emancipation of the Proletariat as a living, growing and developing organism. He feels deeply pained when he finds it "oppressed" and overworked. Like Gandhi, Sartre feels that during the process of earning his subsistence, man loses his individuality, his creativity and his finer sensibilities that constitute the very core of manliness. Handling the machines repeating the movement of the limbs in the same manner over and over again while tending the machine, he

mechanises and dehumanises himself. Hence as he says : "A destiny, limits are imposed on him; he is condemned to fragmented and semi-automatic tasks, whose meaning and purpose, escape him, and to industrial diseases. Forced to repeat the same gesture, a thousand times a day he is discouraged by weariness and poverty from exercising his human qualities, he is shut up in a dull world of repetition, little by little he becomes a thing."<sup>97</sup> Sartre like Gandhi is sceptical about real improvement of the lot of the Proletariat through excessive work for the sake of improving one's economic conditions.

The Proletariat or as Sartre brands it the "conveyor belt operative" tries "to catch up with the profits of the professional man, to offset humiliating, inequalities and to give himself the sense of being, more of a man, but all he achieves is to make himself more of a thing."<sup>98</sup> Thus man in search of material affluence simply reduces himself to "a mere mechanism".

Sartre like Gandhi, feels that man in search of higher economic standard of living sells him away to a system of mass production that "daily delivers secret sentences of death". The inner vitality of man languishes in this search for material affluence. He is "a man upto a certain point". But through his greed for a materially affluent life, he spells his own martyrdom. Because of his passion for material affluence "he wants, what he does not want; his whole body rejects what his will to live accepts."<sup>99</sup> His passion for high level of consumption, makes him recline on a system of mechanisation, and mass production, which monsterises him. As he feels : "Mass production requires that he be contradictory, man and machine at the same time."<sup>100</sup>

Thus Sartre like Gandhi while advocating an egalitarian society advocates liberation of man and liberation of the Proletariat from a system of domination imposed upon it by a mechanical system necessitated by the desire for economic affluence. He is equally categorical and emphatic in his assertion that whereas socialism pre-supposes shifting of emphasis from the self-centred, selfish, egoistic and exploitative individual, individualism should by no means be sacrificed; rather it should

be promoted in the name of an egalitarian society. Complete abnegation of the individual for the sake of an egalitarian society, according to Sartre shall spell the very doom of egalitarian philosophy. Like all societarians and egalitarians, he of course accepts the thesis that the individuals are rooted in the society; yet he views the individuals as distinct and dignified sparks whose assimilation and integration—but not-extinction—constitute the magnificent flame that is the resurgent socialist society. Accordingly while viewing the socialist society as an integrated and coherent whole he feels that the union of men that is necessary to lend society an integrated and organic character should be voluntarily effected and the requisite sociability of the individual should be spontaneously forged without any mediation, or exertion of extraneous influence. Hence as he feels : “In my view, solitude and union are complementary relationships, whose connection is the measure of a society’s integration.”<sup>101</sup> As he further says individuals are not like “soldiers of lead on whom in order to fuse them together it was necessary to work from outside.”<sup>102</sup>

Thus Sartre the Marxist like Gandhi the saint and unlike most of the modern Marxists conceives of a socialist society where individual occupies the centre of the stage. If dignity of the individual is the key-note of Sartre’s socialism as that of Gandhi, Sartre, like Gandhi is opposed to all forms of domination that are perpetrated in the name of establishment of an egalitarian society and the liberation of the individual.

Sartre a champion of the Proletariat is an advocate of reassertion of the dignity of workers. As such a champion he advocates “workers’ victory” against, and their liberation from the domination of the Communist Party, the Party bureaucracy, the elite and communist totalitarianism. As against Leninism and Stalinism that vest real power of the Proletarian state on the elite and the party bureaucracy, Sartre like Gandhi desires to make the Proletariat the real determinator of its own destiny. The Proletariat must work out its own emancipation. As he feels : “Alone it can write its own history . . . . . In short the working class has nothing outside it.”<sup>103</sup>

Sartre is sceptical about the role of the Party, because he encountered that many in the past who were enamoured of Communism and the Communist Party had left it regretfully. Sartre loathes the Party because it "Smothered them in filth."<sup>104</sup> The Proletariat can perform its historic mission only when it act as 'Independents' and revolt against the "perfidy of the Communist Party".<sup>105</sup> Sartre goes so far as to believe that the Proletariat can succeed in erecting the chapel of socialism only by hanging all communists, or on the ruin of the Communist Party.<sup>106</sup> Sartre thus denies the historic role of the Communist Party while advocating the historic role of the Proletariat. For the real upliftment of the Proletariat and full blossoming of their multifaceted personality, the Party must be given a burial and in respect of the historic role of the Party he says "at all costs that must be denied". The Proletariat must play an active and dynamic role in order to reassert its dignity and forge its own future and fortune. As he writes : "To put the party out it is necessary to suppress working class passivity or if you prefer, to get it digested by activity : we shall then have this 'natural but not at all unconscious development' which will lead us imperceptibly from proletariat-seed to proletariat-flower, to proletariat-fruit."<sup>107</sup> Thus Sartre like Gandhi makes a fervent plea for an "autonomous" individual in the sense of freedom from domination by Communist Party.

But if Sartre is against the domination of the Communist Party he is so inclined because of its "authoritarian form of organisation", "harsh means of giving the unity of an army to the masses" "inflexible discipline" and above all for its "struggles for the advent of a new form of exploitation characterised by the domination of working class bureaucracy".<sup>108</sup> Sartre feels that the political party even of the Proletariat shall gradually tend towards concentration of political power in the hands of a 'fraction' and a 'minority' which in turn shall lead to a system of exploitation. As he says : "All authority exerted by a working class minority on the working class in the name of that class itself must necessarily transform itself into a bureaucracy of exploitation."<sup>109</sup>

Such an exercise of absolute power by the Party bureaucracy is considered by Sartre anti-revolutionary and anti-proletarian. Through the creation of distance between the Proletariat and the Party bureaucracy the real objective of Proletarian revolution is defeated. Concentration of powers in the "Central Committee" and the political bureau spells the doom of Proletarian victory and its liberation. The "bad shepherds" he apprehends shall lead the Proletariat astray and because of the mistaken manoeuvre of the pilot the Proletarian ship shall be shipwrecked.<sup>110</sup> As he finally feels: "Stalinism was the grave-digger of the Proletariat; history stops there; the last picture in your revolutionary pastorals represents the end of the world."<sup>111</sup>

Sartre like Gandhi is against the Marxian practices in the Communist countries not only inveighs against the domineering role of the Party; he too like Gandhi desires to rid the socialist system of a system of dominance of the superior intellect among the workers over the inferior intellect. If Gandhi would not tolerate the privileged position of the intellectual labourers over manual labourers, Sartre would not concede superior status to the skilled workers over the unskilled workers or in his language to the "working class elite" over the "conveyor belt operatives". Sartre is of opinion: "Since technical evolution has resulted in taking skill out of work, that final superiority of man over man, this young barbarism must be shown, against all morals and all elites, that the superiorities are mutilations that the only human relationship is that of the real total man, with total man. . . . ."<sup>112</sup>

Further Sartre is of opinion that an ideal picture of socialist society, presupposes obliteration of distinction between man and man on the basis of superior ability or skill. Fulfilment of the basic needs of each worker, skilled or unskilled, is the criterion according to him of socialist humanism. Hence he says: "The humanism of need is in consequence the only humanism which has as its object, the whole of humanity . . . . ."<sup>113</sup> As he further says: "All would be for the best if the humanism of work were progressively obliterated before the humanism of needs."<sup>114</sup> Hence Sartre like Gandhi discovers the deficiency contained in the practices prevalent in

the communist countries, i.e. perpetuation of class-division in such states through the distribution of rewards on the basis of work or the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work." When he argues : "To free the masses from the sense of their inferiority all pre-socialist values would have to be cleared away" he has principally in mind the idea of obliterating the distinction between the privileges and status of the skilled and unskilled workers or "working class elite" and "conveyor belt operative" or in Gandhian terminology intellectual labour and manual labour.

If Sartre desires in the interest of an egalitarian society and real victory of the Proletariat, avoidance of a "dangerous zone" i.e. predominance of "the eminent or of the party" erected on the sovereignty of the masses, he also aspires as already referred to earlier that the Proletariat shall rewrite its own history, develop a sense of militancy and resurgence, and act for its own deliverance. In place of militant action by the elite alone or a handful of militants, or as he describes it "a monologue by the militants and great passivity in the mass", Sartre like Gandhi discovers the spring of socialist revolution in mass movements. In place of the inertia of the masses he advocates their permanent agitation. "Without agitation, great popular movements would be more hesitant, would take longer to come to birth and would be brought to an end more easily."<sup>115</sup>

As Gandhi found that manhood consists not in the acquiescence to evil but resistance to it, Sartre realises that humanism and particularly socialist humanism consists, not in the acquiescence to exploitation but in raising one's banner of revolt against it. Rather Sartre considers acquiescence to violence arising out of exploitation as inhumanism. As he says : "Docile, the worker rejects what is human in himself; insurgent, he rejects what is inhuman. This rejection is itself a humanism, it contains, the exigent demand for a new justice."<sup>116</sup> Rather this assertion of one's right, taking the gauntlet for defending the same, is a type of "positive humanism" considered in the context of a future society.<sup>117</sup>

But although Sartre is an advocate of militant action by the Proletariat for the reassertion of its right and for its liberation,



like Gandhi, and unlike most of the Marxists, he is not enamoured of violence as a technique of socialist revolution. Of course he says : "The workers indifference is no brake on the landslide to massacre; it accelerates it; if it is bound to be decisive, you may as well polish your boots."<sup>118</sup> But all the same Sartre like Gandhi realises the potency of non-violent technique as an armament to be wielded by the insurgent Proletariat, to rewrite its own history. He discerns the glaze of the worker's conduct and its magnificence, when they disarm themselves and "throw down their weapons". He like Gandhi feels that the Proletariat can better promote and safeguard its interests by disarming itself by fighting its battle defenceless, and exposing itself to casualties that can take place. As he says : "That indeed is the condition, in which, the workers are lovable, without weapons, their hands bare, their arms open."<sup>119</sup>

Of course Sartre in his passion for the liberation of the Proletariat sometimes walks to the brink of condoning certain amount of working class violence. As a counterweight against violence perpetrated by the Communist Party, which he brands as "the Party of the hysterical, of assassins, and liars," he suggests : "The whole proletariat must . . . . . be criminal mendacious, and hysterical."<sup>120</sup> But Sartre like Gandhi attaches premium to "gentle manners" as against violence. Even if he urges upon the Proletariat to be militant in order to resurrect humanism, Sartre's militancy falls short of physical violence. Even if he prescribes "strike, with occupation of factories", his technique is inherently Gandhian and takes the sting of violence off the Proletarian militancy. Instead of advocating an upsurge of violence by the Proletariat perpetrated against the privileged section of the society, Sartre like Gandhi would perhaps advocate inflictment of self-suffering on one self or cultivation of the capacity, to die for the sake of defending the cause. As he says : "The truth is that the evolution of technique has completely changed violence : to defend his wages, the conveyor belt operative must risk his skin."<sup>121</sup>

Even if he urges upon the Proletariat to be hysterical, criminal and mendacious he has equally passionately urged

upon them "to keep clear head for spite, hatred, fear perhaps".<sup>122</sup> As he feels "the worker enjoys democratic liberties, he can think, speak, vote, so why need he brawl in the streets like a hooligan?" That apart Sartre denigrates perfidy and cheating as devices for socialist reconstruction and treats them as "incurable vice".

Thus it appears that in the matter of socialist transformation and socialist strategy Sartre, the modern Marxist of the New Left, is almost speaking the language of Gandhi.

### **(c) Gandhi and Fanon**

Frantz Fanon the negro intellectual who belongs to the fraternity of the New Left and who posed himself as the champion of the dumb and the mute, exploited and disinherited millions of the world in general and of the third world in particular, shares some identity of outlook with Gandhi. Fanon who was talking of "millions of men who have been skilfully injected with fear, inferiority-complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement" although turned out subsequently a blood thirsty revolutionary and died the death of an armed rebel while fighting the battle of the weak and the disinherited against neo-colonialism and imperialism, had many things in common with the socialist ideology of Gandhi.

Fanon's primary concern like that of Gandhi was with the liberation of man "restoring man to his proper place" or creation of a new man. Like Gandhi he felt concerned about the problem of self-alienation of man and human alienation. Of course in his handbook on liberation of colonies i.e. "The Wretched of the Earth" his ideas resemble more those of Marx, Stalin and Trotsky than those of Gandhi. He found in violence a dependable device and an appropriate technique for decolonisation. Colonialism, he felt, was the very symbol of violence, political, military, cultural and psychic, and over-looking the Gandhian indissoluble relationship between the end and the means, he advocated that only counter-violence or collective revolutionary violence, can spell the doom of such a system. As Fanon wrote: "Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organised and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses, to understand

social truths and give the key to them”<sup>123</sup> As he further wrote : “At the level of individuals violence is a cleaning force, it frees the native from his inferiority complex, and from his despair and inaction. It makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.”<sup>124</sup>

Thus it appears that Fanon, considered violent technique as an objective necessity for the liberation of the “Wretched of the Earth” of the exploited and the disinherited world. The oppressive world of colonialistic exploitation and repression should be burst asunder by force.

But Fanon like Gandhi was equally conscious, at one stage of his life, that the deliverance of the down-trodden can be effected by the technique of persuasion and conversion of the privileged and the exploiting class. As he said : “I seriously hope to persuade my brother, whether black or white to tear off, with all his strength, the shameful livery put together by centuries of comprehension.”<sup>125</sup> Negatively speaking he also held at discount violent technique. He said equally emphatically : “I do not trust fervour. Every time it has burst out somewhere it has brought fire, famine, misery. . . . . And contempt for man.”<sup>126</sup>

Even in his “The Wretched of the Earth” where Fanon emerged as an advocate of organised violence by the peasantry for its liberation from colonialistic domination he did not completely overlook values that are generally associated with non-violence; rather he inveighed against western imperialism because it was the manifestation of violence. As he said : “Europe undertook the leadership of the world with ardour, cynicism and violence. . . . Europe has declined all humility and modesty; but she has also set her face against all solicitude, and all tenderness. . . . So comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies, which draw their inspiration from her. . . . . We must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man.”<sup>127</sup> Hence as Cesaire has said of Fanon : “Without paradoxes his violence was that of a non-violent man. I mean it was the violence of justice, purity, or intransigence.”

Even if Fanon condoned violence as a technique for the liberation of the underdogs from a system of imperialistic and

bourgeois form of exploitation, he unlike many modern Marxists is an enemy of concentration of political and economic power, a system of domination by political party and party bosses, the cult of elitism or domination of a new class in the name of championship of the rights of the underdogs, and an opponent of authoritarianism. In these respects Fanon's socialist thought resembles greatly the socialist thought of Gandhi rather than that of most of the modern Marxists.

In the economic domain, Fanon advocated nationalisation of both industrial and trading sector for breaking the back of trusts and neo-colonialism, and transforming the nominal independence of the masses into real one. But Fanon like Gandhi was convinced that mere nationalisation of industrial and trading sectors instead of delivering socialist goods, shall engender a system of domination and totalitarianism if such nationalised sectors remain the exclusive preserve of centralised sector. Hence like Gandhi he also advocated radical decentralisation and mass democratic participation and his preference like that of Gandhi was in favour of co-operative enterprises.

Fanon advocated as against most of the modern Marxists, that the peasantry should act as the vanguard of the socialist movement and his ideal was an authentically revolutionary peasant-oriented party. But he was basically opposed to hierarchically organised centrally controlled party organisation since he apprehended that the control of the party by the party bosses and party bureaucracy will lead to egocentrism and totalitarianism and defeat the very purpose of revolution. Critical of the practice in Africa, Fanon has written : "The party leaders behave like common sergent-majors."<sup>128</sup> To obviate the shortcoming of the system, Fanon planned to scuttle the predominance of the party and the party bosses.

The party according to him may at best act as a means of discovering and formulating the needs of the people. Even then it must be decentrally organised, drawing its inspiration from regions and localities. It is here in the regions and localities that the peasantry can effectively participate in the revolutionary activities and make the revolution a vehicle for the liberation of the masses. Any centrally controlled party,

Fanon felt, shall upset the revolutionary potentialities of popular movements.

Fanon apprehended that the association of party bosses with government shall further accentuate the trend towards totalitarianism and bureaucratic tyranny. Besides Fanon insisted upon the need of separation of the party from the government and administration. He apprehended that association of party bosses with Government shall accentuate the trend towards totalitarianism. Hence the party even if constituting the vanguard of the revolution should not present any careerist opportunities. Thus like Gandhi Fanon looked with scepticism at concentration of power and his advocacy for dissociation of the party from the government simply represents his suspicion for authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Hence Fanon like Gandhi became an advocate in chief of decentralisation of power and collective ownership of governmental authority. As it has been observed : "He talked in terms of collective responsibility at the base and collegiate responsibility at the centre."<sup>129</sup> Thus Fanon the socialist strategist and rebel of the third world has many ideas in common with the socialist thought of Mahatma Gandhi.

Finally, the love of the New Left for liberalism, real freedom and self-fulfilment, discontent and resentment at the "soullessness of profit-making industry and greyness of welfare as a single ultimate ideal" and mechanisation of life and human relationship, and above all its revolt against establishment of both the traditional and modern communist variety, appears Gandhian in approach. So it has been very aptly remarked : "The pattern of thought of the New Left. . . . is reminiscent of Gandhi's social philosophy."<sup>130</sup>

### GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND THE MODERN REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH

Gabriel Cohn Bendit and Daniel Cohn Bendit who spear-headed the revolt of the French youth against the capitalistic, privilege-ridden and class-dominated society and held aloft the banner of socialism, although differ from Gandhi in respect of strategy, subscribe to many values that constitute the essential

ingredients of Gandhian socialism. Although their militant strategy does not run short of violence and is thus diametrically opposed to the Gandhian militant non-violence, their concept of the essence of socialism, i.e. emphasis on ethical values, libertarian approach to socialism and rank opposition to bureaucratisation and domination appears to have a Gandhian fervour.

The revolt of the youth that Cohn Bendits represented and spearheaded was primarily a revolt against the bourgeois value system of the existing society. The revolt of the youth manifested the boredom and disgust at the "drab monotony of their everyday life" impatience at the "extreme emotional poverty", contempt for the modern society with "a plethora of. . . . sterile choices of entertainment" and "cars, electric guitars, clothes and records" and disdain for a life "without any real culture". The youth revolted against the society for the false value system that it fostered, i.e. a system of systematic subordination of individual behaviour to false social norms that is highly materialistic, for rejection of personal liberty, and for the "conditioning of the workers to consume more and more rubbish, while acquiescing in economic exploitation".<sup>131</sup> They were contemptuous of the technological civilisation because it produced a class of people that took "no interest in any problem except their own" and was indifferent to poignant sufferings throughout the world.<sup>132</sup>

If the youth revolted against the University authorities, it is because, in their view, the latter promoted a false sense of value. The Universities according to them, fostered the growth of technocrats, bureaucrats, and "managerial elites". They discovered that the universities provided opportunities "only concerned with their professional future". As the Cohn Bendits write : "They realise that much of what they are taught is false or at least inadequate. They have no illusion about the purely utilitarian function of their education, know that they will be fitted to hold down a good job and are willing to accept the official bribes of privilege, a car, holidays abroad, money, a house in the country."<sup>133</sup> They felt that the Universities had become only a set of "technical high schools" so many

appendages to the major industries.<sup>134</sup> They detasted that the "economic rather than the theoretical role" of the University should be predominant. The youth revolted against their parents because they were tied down to "the dead empty lives" generated by materialistic civilisation.<sup>135</sup>

But if the French Youth revolted against the society, their parents, the University or the bourgeois value system of the industrial society, the revolt had its positive counterpart too, that is evident from their aspiration about the role of the University. As Cohn Bendits write : "The University is supposed to be the supreme-guardian of 'Culture' human reason and disinterested research of unalloyed truth and objectivity. In brief, the University is supposed to be the temple and eternal repository of spiritual values of society."<sup>136</sup>

Thus the modern revolutionary youth and particularly Cohn Bendits while championing the cause of socialism accord to moral and spiritual value a place of pre-eminence in their scheme of socialist reconstruction. Hence they came closer to Gandhian socialist idealism and demonstrate the relevance of Gandhian socialist thought for the youth of the modern world.

Besides, Cohn Bendits representing the sentiments and aspirations of the modern youth, while aspire for socialism, for the elimination of exploitation, like Gandhi are primarily concerned with the development of the humanity of man and his integrated personality. Man for them is "more than a mere consumer," while like Gandhi they do not completely overlook, the material side of man's life and the urgency of fulfilment of their basic material needs, they like the former also recognise man's "right to find fulfilment on every other possible level".<sup>137</sup>

If the development of integrated personality of man is the primary concern of Cohn Bendits, like that of Gandhi, the former like the latter envisions a libertarian social order instead of a dominated one. The former like the latter put the individual at the centre of the socialist system. Accordingly Cohn Bendits advocate : "Socialists must do their utmost to restore the peoples autonomy."<sup>138</sup>

The libertarian socialist philosophy of Cohn Bendits that

so passionately champions the cause of "People's autonomy" discovers danger to the blossoming of such autonomy and above all to the cause of socialism in the system of economic, political and social domination, perpetrated by a system of party bureaucracy and workers bureaucracy. Cohn Bendits like Gandhi recognise that to put an end to the violence and exploitation of the capitalist economy, the bourgeois system of production should be restrained. But what is more significant is that like Gandhi they also recognise that "the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, essential though it is, does not necessarily mean the end of exploitations".<sup>139</sup> Control of the economy and the political system by party and workers' bureaucracy, after the elimination of private ownership of means of production, spell the very negation of individual's autonomy and the very spirit of socialism.

Cohn Bendits in inveighing against the domination of the party, go against the socialist trend dating back to the philosophy of Lenin and tread the path of economic and political democracy trodden by Gandhi. They are opposed to the Leninist conception of Party acting as the vanguard of Proletarian resurgence to power. They rather feel that Party bosses and Party bureaucracy shall turn the tide of socialist revolution into the channel of counter-revolution. That, according to them is "tantamount to beheading the Proletariat". They apprehend that the idea of a band of professional revolutionaries organised into Party reduces the very prospect of libertarian socialism. As they have observed: "The setting up of any Party inevitably reduces freedom of the people to freedom to agree with the Party."<sup>140</sup> Party and Party leadership, they feel, spell the very doom of democracy. The Party bureaucracy and its authoritarian leadership cannot by the very nature of things champion the cause of workers' rights. They apprehend that such Party bureaucracy and authoritarian leadership shall inaugurate state apparatus that shall crush with iron fist the blossoming of individuality, that is the very cornerstone of the concept of socialism. Hence they say, "The Party because of its basic conception is bound to bring in privilege and bureaucracy and we must wash our hands of all organisations of this sort."<sup>141</sup> Thus they desire to dismantle the barbed-wire



fence of the Party that puts the entire Proletariat behind it. They categorically assert : "What we challenge is the need for a revolutionary leadership, the need for a Party."<sup>142</sup>

Equally passionately Cohn Bendits inveigh against the workers' bureaucracy. Like Gandhi Cohn Bendits do not recognise the superiority of intellectual labour and on the ground of the same their privileges. They are distressed to find that automationisation of the economy has split the producing class into more and more distinct stratas such as unskilled labourers, who are to serve as mere robots, skilled crafts-men staff grades, etc. over which stand the managerial bureaucracy. That apart the emergence of trade unions has created another type of bureaucracy, i.e. Trade Union bureaucracy. Both the types of workers' bureaucracy they feel are obnoxious from the standpoint of the blossoming of the values of socialism. As they say : "Now this bureaucracy, far from trying to represent the workers, endeavours to persuade them of the general benefits of capitalist production, while staking its own claim to a managerial say in the running of industry and the state."<sup>143</sup>

Both branches of the workers' bureaucracy, i.e. the managerial and the trade union "have the same long term interests as the bourgeoisie". Such workers bureaucracy perpetrates "a hierarchical structure in which the top becomes increasingly remote from the bottom." Such bureaucrats so manipulate matters that the workers act as "mere puppets a flock of trained sheep, who bleat when they are told to do so and at no other time".<sup>144</sup>

Hence Cohn Bendits like Gandhi have become real advocates of proletarian democracy in the political and economic domain. They advocate that for the sake of building up socialism, the workers themselves should take their initiative and fight their own battle of liberation. As they say : "The workers can only defend themselves, and build a socialist society, by taking their fate into their own hands."<sup>145</sup> If workers' socialism is to succeed and survive, no form of organisation shall be allowed to dam the spontaneous flow of workers' initiative. For the sake of making workers socialism sprout and flourish plurality and diversity of political currents "struggle against the formation of any kind of hierarchy", running of factories and

business "by those who work in them" and abolition of artificial distinction within labour in particular, "between manual and intellectual work" must be ensured. Besides, "our main task is to keep on challenging the traditional bureaucratic structure both in the government and also in the working class movement."<sup>146</sup>

To conclude according to the libertarian socialist philosophy of Cohn Bendits and the modern youth whom they represent a free society is only conceivable when "all have learnt to express themselves in harmony with the rest". As they say : "The type of organisation we must build can neither be a vanguard nor a rearguard but must be right in the thick of the fight. What we need is not organisation with capital "O" but a host of insurrectional cells."<sup>147</sup>

Thus the modern revolutionary University youth subscribe to a socialist ideology that has a great deal of identity with the socialist thought of Gandhi.

### GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND THE LATEST CHINESE EXPERIMENTS

The latest trend in Chinese socialist ideology, particularly the developments since the Cultural Revolution that rocked the post liberation socialist system to the roots, underlines the relevance of Gandhian socialist thought and indicates how the Gandhian socialist ideology represents the most latest trend in socialist thought. Particularly the relevance of Gandhian socialist concept of decentralised system of political and economic power and libertarian nature of socialism stand out in bold relief.

The Cultural Revolution of China that shook the social, economic, political and cultural fabric of China to depth was a revelation that mere abolition of private property and their concentration in the hands of the state do not take any one, any society or any economic system an inch nearer to the lofty ideal of socialism. State ownership and control of the entire economy may provide the base of socialism but not the superstructure. As Joan Robinson has very brilliantly put it : "Inequality in consumption, the love of rank, status and power,

untrammelled individualism and a social hierarchy based on wealth, belong to the bourgeois super-structure of capitalism."<sup>148</sup> Socialist super-structure therefore presupposes replacement of these values by more subtle societarian values. Besides as Joan Robinson has observed : "The super-structure of Proletarian socialism requires acquisitiveness to be replaced by a spirit of service."<sup>149</sup>

Mao Tse-Tung and his lieutenants—the champions of Cultural Revolution in China—discovered, that the socialist revolution initiated in China, after decades of struggle and strife was in a bad state and was suffering from distortion and degeneration because of too much reliance on a mere socialist base, i.e. elimination of private ownership and concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the state and the party, that had led to bureaucratisation and bossism by party elite. They witnessed that the gravest danger to socialist super-structure was being posed by the party, and industrial and governmental bureaucracy. They branded the Soviet system revisionistic because according to them while it provided a strong base to socialism was building up a capitalist type super-structure and had done an irreparable damage to the cause of socialism. But they realised that Chinese economic and social system was also marching on the Soviet revisionist way. They found that the scientists, the technocrats and the managerial class whose services were requisitioned for running and managing the state-owned economy, while paying lip service to the cause of socialism, were making the system move with a reverse gear and were themselves walking on the capitalist road. The Party persons carried out their work in an authoritarian fashion, developed a superior attitude to the workers and took advantage of their position to gain privileges and amenities for themselves. Thus the growing acquisitiveness, on the part of the party, industrial and governmental bureaucracy, in respect of enjoyment and exercise of power, and their love of rank and consciousness of status, were once again making the society hierarchical and compromising the very spirit of socialism. In the name of socialism, class stratification was getting solidified. The Cultural Revolution of China was a revolt against such distortion of the socialist

system or "a new kind of class war—a revolt of the new Proletariat of workers in socialist enterprises and peasants turned commune members against the incipient new class of organisation men in the Communist Party."<sup>150</sup>

The Sixteen Point Programme of the revolutionaries adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party therefore reads: "The main target of the present movement is those within the Party who are in authority and are taking the capitalist road."<sup>151</sup> This is also evident from Mao's Big-Character Poster that urged upon the revolutionaries to bombard the Headquarters of the Party. As he accused the Party bosses: "Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie they have enforced a bourgeois dictatorship, and struck down the surging movement of the Great Cultural Revolution of the Proletariat. . . . They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the Proletariat. How Poisonous!"<sup>152</sup> Besides it was a revolt of the socialistically inspired masses against the organisation-men in general and against those of them who were walking a privileged and bureaucratic road to the socialist power in particular.

Thus the Cultural Revolution in China has exploded the myth of centralisation and complete state ownership as the appropriate vehicle for socialism. It has exhibited the hollowness of this system that leads to bossism and bureaucratisation which are the very anti-thesis of real socialist values.

If the Cultural Revolution designed by Mao was "anti-bureaucratic" and anti-authority, on the positive side it was pro-mass or pro-people in nature. While Mao did not overlook the role of the Party—the Communist Party—because of his suspicion of bossism and bureaucratisation resorted to by the Party he advocated powers to pass into the hands of the masses. The masses were expected to seize power from the top Party persons. Thus Mao like Gandhi adopted the policy of transfer of power to the masses, instead of its concentration in a "New Class" of bureaucrats, technocrats, and Party bosses.

The emphasis of the Cultural Revolution and that of Mao

like that of Gandhi was therefore on the role of the masses and their initiative, in the matter of staging the socialist revolution. Instead of relying on a set of leaders the architects of the Cultural Revolution and particularly Mao reposed their faith on the masses. The masses must themselves take initiative, stage the revolution and liberate themselves from the system of bureaucratisation and authoritarianism. If the persons in authority who are walking the capitalist road are to be dislodged from power, the masses must play their own game. Hence the Sixteen Point Programme adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party preceding the Cultural Revolution reads: "The masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers, revolutionary intellectuals and revolutionary cadres form the main force in this great Cultural Revolution."<sup>153</sup> As it further reads: "In the great Proletariat Cultural Revolution the only method is for the masses to liberate themselves and any method of doing things in their stead must not be used. Trust the masses, rely on them, and respect their initiative. Cast out fear. Don't be afraid of disturbances."<sup>154</sup> Thus Mao like Gandhi relied solely on the role of the masses. Mass-base provided the foundation of the latest Chinese brand of socialism as that of Gandhi.

Besides, the latest Chinese emphasis and particularly the emphasis during the Cultural Revolution on the democratic technique of discussion by the masses, and attempts at converting petty-bourgeois elements and those who were treading the capitalistic path, underline the relevance of the Gandhian technique of democratic discussion and persuasion and conversion of the privileged class instead of the efficacy of the technique of coercion. For example while the architects of Cultural Revolution, particularly Mao, held that the masses should take initiative in the matter of immortalising the socialist revolution, the correct line of policy to be adopted by them was to be determined by debates and discussion. Mao like Gandhi acknowledged the libertarian character of the socialist revolution. Hence the Sixteen Point Programme of the Cultural Revolution reads: "It is normal for the masses to hold different views. Contention between different views is unavoidable, necessary and beneficial. In the course of normal

and full debate, the masses will affirm what is right, correct, what is wrong and gradually reach unanimity.”<sup>155</sup>

Not only the architects of Cultural Revolution believed in discussion and debate by the masses prior to the adoption of mass line of action, they believed in free and frank instead of guided discussion, enforced through Party discipline. Hence it is said : “When there is debate, it should be conducted by reasoning, not by coercion or force. In the course of the debate, every revolutionary should be good at thinking things out for himself and should develop the communist spirit of daring to think, daring to speak and daring to act.”<sup>156</sup>

Not only the masses were expected to debate and discuss the revolutionary strategy among themselves, “The masses are entitled at any time to criticise members of the cultural revolutionary groups and committees and delegates elected to the cultural revolutionary congresses.”<sup>157</sup>

Besides, whereas the bureaucrats in the Party and the government – those developing petty-bourgeois trend and those walking the capitalist road—were to be discredited and overthrown, the architects of the Cultural Revolution laid as much stress as Gandhi on education of these classes and their conversion to true socialist line. They were to be given opportunity according to Mao to improve themselves and transform themselves. Hence the Sixteen Point Programme of the Cultural Revolution reads : “The anti-Party anti-socialist Rightists must be fully exposed, refuted, overthrown, and -completely discredited and their influence eliminated. At the same time they should be given a chance to turn over a new leaf.”<sup>158</sup>

The architects of Chinese socialism, in their anxiety to rid their system of bureaucratisation, bossism by Party hierarchy and its authoritarianism, and reject what Alberto Moravia has termed as “Petit-bourgeois phase of communism”<sup>159</sup> have also devised a system of economy that holds in bold relief the Gandhian device of decentralised system of socialism and proves its potency and relevance. The latest trend in China following the Cultural Revolution is in favour of decentralised, self-reliant and self-sufficient system of economy or what Audrey Donnithorne has described “intensification of the tendencies

towards a cellular economy".<sup>160</sup> Under the new system whereas researches, and production for military purposes are comparatively centralised, the sector that produces the basic requirement of the workers "is strongly decentralised, largely runs on the principles of so-called self-reliance."<sup>161</sup> The number of cadres in organs of the Central Government numbered only 19,000 in 1970 as compared with 60,000 before the Cultural Revolution. Besides the activities of Central Government ministries are now largely limited to conferences, exhibitions, writing groups, entertainment of foreign visitors and the control of institutes for research and design. On the other hand, a multitude of small enterprises free from centralised control are springing up in the countryside and are developing on the line of Chairman Mao's great principle of self-reliance and self-sufficiency as against the bureaucratic socialism of the Soviet model.

The principle of self-reliance is followed by units, big and small, both industrial and agricultural enterprises. The industrial and agricultural production centres are self-reliant in the sense that they provide their own capital requirement without state aid, design their own apparatus and manufacture their own tools. Besides, the areas and localities "hseins" and municipalities are developing a sense of regional self-sufficiency or building up "a small but complete local industrial system of self-reliance". In the words of the Shansi provincial radio service "to battle hard for one or two years and achieve provincial self-sufficiency in light-industry product is the glorious battle task of the workers, technicians and revolutionary cadres on the front of light industry."<sup>162</sup> The municipality of Wuhan was completely self-sufficient in equipment for producing chemical fertiliser and attained 95 percent self-sufficiency in equipment for motor vehicles and bicycles by the first of 1970.<sup>163</sup> Even the smaller cities like Nanchang the capital of Kiangsi with a population of only 500,000 became self-sufficient to the extent of 80 per cent in respect of main products of light-industry while a small town of Kochiu in Yunnan claimed complete self-sufficiency in light industries and handicrafts goods by late 1970.<sup>164</sup>

Self-sufficiency is applied not only to manufacture but also

to agriculture. As one foreign visitor noticed in China two neighbouring communes were each building a chemical fertiliser plant of the same type.<sup>166</sup>

Thus the latest trend in the Chinese socialist experiment is of the nature of an unconscious attempt to realise the Gandhian vision of a libertarian, antitotalitarian, antibureaucratic and a decentralised type of socialist system erected on the foundation of a self-sufficient and self-reliant village republics.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up although Gandhi has been dubbed as a revivalist, a reactionary, an obscurantist, a scion of the bourgeoisie and a friend of the privileged class, his social philosophy far from being a doctrine of the bourgeoisie, attempting to prop up a privilege-ridden society, has not only a distinctly egalitarian character; it greatly resembles the most radical and libertarian trend in modern socialist thought. Not only his claims as a socialist and a communist are corroborated by his sociological outlook, the modern socialist thought and movements are gradually discovering, consciously or unconsciously, sense and relevance in some of the basic tenets of Gandhian socialist thought and his strategy for socialist transformation. His doctrine of Sarvodaya or all-round emancipation of all, non-violent technique, decentralised system of economy, disdain for totalitarian and bureaucratic control over the socialist society and in its stead, a libertarian approach to socialism are gradually having greater appeal for socialist thinkers of the world.

The New Humanism of M.N. Roy and the Scientific Humanism of Jawaharlal Nehru with their spiritual and ethical overtone and faith in radical human values rather than mere material affluence, and the Socialist thought of the New Left and particularly that of Marcuse, Sartre and Fanon, with their rabid libertarian approach and revolt against evolution of an organisation man, dehumanised and devoid of all socialist values, appear to be mere echoes of Gandhian concept of socialism. Hence judged by the modern socialist standard, its values and emphasis, strategy and technique, Gandhian socialism can



safely be ranked among the most modern and the latest variety of socialism.

Because of his reliance on non-violent technique—the technique of persuasion and conversion of the privileged section of the society so that they may act as the catalytic agents of socialist transformation—or as Marx would describe it, the technique of “appeal to society at large without distinction of class; nay by preference to the ruling class” and judged by the orthodox Marxist revolutionary standard, Gandhi may be dubbed as “a social quack” or at best a Utopian Socialist. No doubt Gandhian socialist thought has a utopian touch because of its concept of welfare of the entire world, emphasis on the spiritual and ethical development of man, faith in the principle of bread labour or particularly the principle of equality of wage both of physical labour and intellectual labour and above all for its reliance on the doctrine of Trusteeship. But judged by the standard laid down by Albert Camus, Gandhi was definitely a rebel and as conceived by Wolfenstein, Geoffrey Ashe and Wilfred Wellock he was unmistakably a revolutionary. Apart from his identity of outlook with many radical socialist thinkers of the age, his concept of bread labour and particularly the concept of equality of wage of both intellectual and manual labour, his activism, sense of militancy and employment of the technique of militant Satyagraha against the privileged-class, and under unavoidable circumstances even resort to minimum of force against them, drives an element of radicalism and militancy into his socialist thoughts and practices. Hence as already indicated earlier, Gandhian socialism instead of being dubbed as utopianism and reformism can more appropriately be christened as *Radical Utopianism* or *Militant Utopianism*.

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## CHAPTER 11

# GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND THE SOCIALISM OF TOMORROW

Gandhi, who at one time was condemned as a revivalist and a reactionary, a scion of the bourgeoisie and a defender of the privilege-ridden society, has of late gained recognition as a social revolutionary, a champion of the underdogs and a strategist of egalitarian reconstruction of society both at home and abroad. Besides, the radical, rationalist, and libertarian socialist thinkers of the world are either consciously or unconsciously, discovering sense and relevance in some of the values that constitute the cornerstones of Gandhian egalitarian philosophy. The question that may naturally arise is, if Gandhian socialist doctrine contains, certain elements of radicalism and progressivism that satisfy the needs and urges of modern radical and libertarian socialist thinkers, to what extent can it meet the requirements of the socialist thinkers and strategists of the days to come ?

Socialism is a lofty humane ideal. Of all the social philosophies it appears to be the most rational, scientific, ethical, moral and humane social philosophy with a capital "S". As a social doctrine it not only has an appeal for the ethical and spiritual fibre of all individuals, it has a far numerous clientele than any other social philosophy conceived or so far conceivable.

Socialism is the most rational and scientific social doctrine because it aspires to uphold and promote the interests of each member of the society. Since it accepts an organic view of social development and social prosperity or development of all



organs of the body-social, simultaneously, it is a doctrine consistent with the ultimate social objective and hence the most rational and scientific social philosophy or the only philosophy that can be termed truly social. It is a rational and scientific doctrine because it aims at bridging the gap between privilege and poverty, and affluence and scarcity and make the society a coherent and integrated whole.

Besides, socialism is the most ethical and moral social doctrine so far conceived because, it rejects outright the concepts of poverty of many in face of the affluence of a few, shortages and scarcity of essential needs of the bulk of the society, in face of a life of luxury and wastage on the part of a few, and the sorry spectacle of misery, destitution, and deprivation of the hard-working, men and women, young and old, in face of indulgence of a handful of social parasites and idlers. It is moral and ethical because it aspires to provide every body his due. It is more so because by advocating elevation of the status of the suffering, destitutes and underdogs, it aspires to provide them the avenue to get rid of a spirit of rancour, animosity, anger, hatred and violence against the possessing and the privileged classes and by depriving the wealthy and the privileged class of their luxury and indulgence, it aspires to facilitate their moral and spiritual resurgence.

Socialism is also a sublime humanitarian doctrine. It recognises the worth and dignity of each individual and aspires to restore man to his proper place. It aspires to provide individual's opportunities that will stimulate the manliness in men, promote their human virtues and make them better human beings. Since it holds in highest esteem human values like equality, fraternity, fellowship and freedom, it is unmistakably a sublime humanitarian doctrine.

Besides, it has been contended by many who count, that it is the vision of a new civilisation. Frederick Engels writing in 1884 said: "Naked greed has been the moving spirit of civilisation from the first day of its existence to the present time."<sup>1</sup> Thus "greed" dominates the social motivation of the individuals in non-socialist societies and as a result, exploitation and violence are perpetrated and inegalitarianism is generated in the society. The society that emerges as a result of greed, exploi-



**Tolstoy who inspired Gandhian Socialist Thought in general  
and his concept of Bread Labour in particular.**



**Gandhi at Phoenix Settlement, his first experiment in  
establishing Socialist Community.**



**The Socialist's march to Rajghat.**



**Earthly possessions of Gandhi, the Socialist.**

tation and violence, upholds false values, i.e. division of society into haves and have-nots, privileged and under-privileged and wealthy and poor. Life loses its significance for the multitude who lead a sub-human existence. Such a society can hardly be termed as a civilised society. Socialism that holds at a discount greed, exploitation and social violence, holds out the promise of elimination of the distinction between privilege and poverty and affluence and shortage, aspires to break all artificial barriers between man and man and assure to each individual a dignified existence and full blossoming of his potentialities and proliferation of human values like equality, fraternity and fellowship is certainly the vision of a new civilisation.

Since socialism represents such lofty ideals and values, it gives the impression of having a promising future. All other social philosophies and social systems that dominated human thought prior to the advent of socialism, have been discredited and have either been discarded or undergoing a process of anaesthetisation and slow death. The social system based on slavery and serfdom has vanished. The *laissez-faire* social philosophy giving rise to the buoyant bourgeois system of production and distribution has died its natural death and has no chance of its revival. The unbridled capitalism that arose as an offshoot of *laissez-faire* social philosophy is gradually giving place to welfarism in the socio-economic domain.

But all the socio-economic systems preceding socialism have either gone down or going down because they were transplanted on irrational, unscientific, unethical and inhuman foundations. The super-structure of such social systems could not survive because they rested on a shaky substructure of exploitation, violence, conflicts and contradictions and a rotten value system. Since socialism rests on a system of ethical, moral and humanitarian values, the social system embodying such values is likely to equilibrate without undergoing a process of decline in future. In Marxian terminology, evolution of the social system may finally culminate in the emergence of socialism beyond which no further evolution may be conceivable.

Hence it appears that although the nature, character and emphasis of socialism may differ from country to country,

depending upon the objective situation of the respective countries, unless the socialist strategists commit irreparable blunder and compromise the basic socialist values, socialism will one day embrace the entire world. Douglas Jay in his treatise on socialism has very optimistically observed that socialism "is the only creed which can satisfy in practice the aspirations of twentieth century man."<sup>2</sup> It may be argued by socialist enthusiasts that unless human species suffer from a state of complete moral bankruptcy or intellectual paralysis, it will certainly cherish the socialist values not only in the twentieth century but also in the centuries to come. Hence there is much truth in what Russel said in 1920 : "Russian communism may fail and go under, but socialism itself will not die."<sup>3</sup>

But inspite of the fact that socialism stands for certain lofty ideals and sublime values it has not made much dent on the social systems of the world even after about a century and half of the Owenite attempt at the popularisation of the concept. Inspite of much talk about socialism and chanting of socialist slogans, no country appears to be truly socialistic. The transparent sincerity of purpose of the Utopian Socialists and their emphasis on the creation of small socialist communities through which they expected socialist values would permeate the entire social fabric and would transform it by their creative influences from without, could not inspire much hope, have adequate impact, and carry forward the world in the direction of socialism. The acquisitive world could not be contaminated by the spirit of communitarianism, and societarian approach and a feeling of fraternity and fellowship did not make any tangible impact on the inegalitarian social system. Owen's personal sacrifices, appeals and dedicated exhortations fell on the deaf ears of the egoistic and self-centred capitalist world of the nineteenth century.

The radical and militant socialist thought of the *Scientific Socialists* aroused hope and expectations of the exploited underdogs and the suffering multitude, for about three quarters of a century. When it was experimented in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution it kindled the hope and ignited the aspirations of millions of the exploited, degenerate, and the lost all over the world and the vision of an egalitarian society

blazoned forth with the prospect of early realisation of a millenium in the rest of the world. But the world felt disillusioned too soon with the nature of emphasis, the direction of development and the pattern of political, administrative, social and economic system that emerged in the Soviet Union. The hopes of the underdogs have been shattered and the vision gradually faded and has ultimately vanished. The *New Civilisation* that Sydney and Beatrice Webb visualised, has ended in a crash and catastrophe. There has been a crisis of confidence in respect of the future of man under a socialist system.

If such is the fate of the socialist movement so far, it is due to the fact that the perspective has not been kept clear, the emphasis has been misplaced and the strategy is misconceived. The Utopian Socialists were no doubt well-intentioned idealists but they started with a limited vision and a narrow perspective. They started with the objective of improvement of the lot only of the underdogs through reorganisation of the economic system only and did not perceive beyond the narrow limit of the smaller communities or communes or Phalansteres. The authors of *Scientific Socialism* had no doubt the vision of "free-development of all" but their "all" embraced only the working class and their stirring call was "working men of all countries, unite". The *Scientific Socialists* of the Soviet Union also started with a sectarian philosophy and confined their vision to the emancipation of the working class and with the rejection of the Trotskyite doctrine of world perspective, international vision and Permanent Revolution and acceptance of the doctrine of "socialism in one country", socialism became too narrow and sectarian a creed. Trotsky branded it as a retrograde step and a "reactionary utopia".<sup>4</sup>

Since socialism acquired a narrow perspective and limited vision, during the course of its experimentation in the Soviet Union the high ideals have lost their pristine virtues and their magnetic pull. Since socialism became the philosophy of a single class—the working class—it antagonised other sections of the society in the Soviet Union, and whipped up the resistance not only of the national bourgeoisie, petty-bourgeoisie and the peasants, but also of the international bourgeoisie. As it became a narrow nationalist doctrine during the Stalin era, it earned



for itself international animosity of major powers. Thus as it became a narrow sectarian and national creed it earned for itself the enmity of domestic and foreign enemies—the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the kulaks at home and the capitalist and the non-socialist forces abroad. In order to defend itself against the combined assault of these national and international non-socialist forces, it had to screw up the system of control that led to rigid discipline at all levels and perpetration of terror, force, violence, regimentation and espionage in every sphere – social, economic and political—that compromised all socialist values.

Thus the experiments of *Utopian Socialists* and the Soviet experiments have proved unequivocally that socialism in order to be a living, growing, developing, and expanding philosophy must have a wider vision, far transcending the narrow, sectional, class or national interests.

Since socialism is a question of scientific and rational reconstruction of society it can ill-afford to be a class philosophy and it must aim at the prosperity and well-being of the society as a whole. Because it is primarily concerned with promotion of human values like equality, fraternity and fellowship, the question of promotion of sectional interests is against the very spirit of socialism. Speaking from the strategic standpoint, any attempt at upholding group or sectional interests—may be of the underdogs and the under-privileged - at the expense of others, is sure to foment the opposition and antagonism of the latter which may necessitate generation of a system of violence and oppression that may compromise the very essence of socialism. Hence socialism in order to be a realisable, living, growing, and developing social philosophy must aspire to promote the welfare of all sections of the society over the entire globe.

Pursuance of this objective of achieving socialism on a global scale has almost become an objective necessity. With the growing technological and communication revolution, internationalisation of national economy, transcontinental and international travels and the latest conquest of space, the world is gradually shrinking, the narrow national boundaries are collapsing and a global human community is imperceptibly

emerging. Economic and social problems of a small African nation are having their impact on the far off New York city. The rate of wages in the Middle East is determining the hotel bills in Ottawa. As it has been observed : "Permission by the governments of Afghanistan to its hardpressed farmers to produce opium for sale to illicit drugholders could negate efforts to arrest the spread of drug addiction in the United States. A decision by an African government to expropriate holdings of a U.S. mining company can affect the retirement income of an elderly couple in Minneapolis . . . . . The discharge of waste mercury by Japanese and Taiwanese industrialists can cause sword fish to be taken off menus in the United States. Oil spills from Norwegian tankers affect beaches in Florida." <sup>5</sup> S. Radhakrishnan has also observed : "The products of spirit and intelligence, the positive sciences, the engineering techniques, the governmental forms, the legal regulations, the administrative arrangements, and the economic institutions are binding together peoples of varied culture and bringing them into closer reciprocal contact. The world today is tending to function as one organism." <sup>6</sup> Hence no movement in the modern world least of it, socialism, in order to succeed, can be pursued on a sectarian or national scale.

But, inspite of the growing interdependence of nations and gradual emergence of a global community, there has occurred polarisation of wealth on a global scale. The international community has become highly inegalitarian. It appears as if two worlds instead of one, are existing side by side one of the rich, over-fed, over-weights and another of the poor, hungry and under-nourished. According to recent estimates, over one-half of the human families of the world have an average per capita income of less than \$ 100 a year, one-fourth between \$ 100 and \$ 1000 a year and the rest have an annual income of over \$ 1000. As it has been felt : "An affluent global minority is over-fed, and over-weight, but more than half of mankind is hungry and malnourished; some can afford heart transplants, but half of mankind receives no health care at all, a handful of Americans have journey to the moon, but much of mankind can not afford a visit to the nearest city." <sup>7</sup> With the higher rate of growth of the developed countries,

and their comparatively greater amount of investible surplus wealth, the disparity in international scale would be further accentuated in future. In 1970 the per capita income in the United States of America was \$ 4100 whereas that of India was \$ 90. It is estimated that by the turn of the century, the relative income in U.S.A. and India shall be \$ 10,000 and \$ 215 respectively.

This economic disparity in the world scale breeds envy of the poor nations against the richer ones. Due to communication revolution people of the poorer nations becoming conscious of the prosperity of the richer nations and their own relative poverty, are not only dreaming of a higher standard of living like that of the latter; they have started questioning the rationality of the inhabitants of the richer nations constituting a fraction of the population of the world monopolising a bulk of the natural endowments of the globe for their own sake. The defence expenditure of the richer countries of the world is primarily directed at defending their privileges against the onslaught of the international proletariat. But unless the prosperity of the world is shared both by the richer peoples and the nations with hungry, starving and malnourished billions of people who lead subhuman existence, there cannot be a stable equilibrium in the world. This is being gradually realised by the saner and rational sections of the thinking public of the world that advocates breaking down of the artificial national frontiers in respect of tackling the problem of poverty and inequality and creation of a world without borders. As S Radhakrishnan has observed : "The future civilisation will have to rise to a universal vision of man and human life."<sup>8</sup>

Hence eradication of disparity in the world scale has become an imperative necessity and accordingly, socialism in order to be a living, and growing philosophy and to have relevance for the modern world and the days to come, must not be conceived in a narrow national context but should assume an international or a global perspective. It must aspire for the reduction of inequality on a global scale and improvement of the lot of the unfortunate and the underdogs of the entire world. As Trotsky said, "The socialist revolution . . . . attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire

planet.”<sup>9</sup>

But the socialist revolution in order to attain its real victory must transcend the Trotskyite or Marxian notion of emancipation of only the Proletariat and should comprehend the emancipation and welfare of all sections of population of the globe or assume a global and universal character. Here the Gandhian notion of socialism or the doctrine of “Sarvodaya” or “welfare of all” or emancipation of all, may serve as a guideline for the socialist strategists of the future. Unless the Gandhian ideal of “Sarvodaya” or the “welfare of all” inspires the socialist doctrine and the socialist strategists, and unless socialism is pursued on a global scale in the world community, socialism will lose its lofty and transcendental character and will have a very bleak future.

Besides, the Gandhian concept of socialism understood in the sense of “Sarvodaya” or all-round and integrated development and welfare of all individuals, will also provide a viable model for the socialism of tomorrow. Socialism is primarily concerned with the promotion of human values and human virtues. Because it envisages proliferation of human values like freedom, equality, fraternity and fellowship it has been branded as a new civilisation. But it is being increasingly realised that the vision of the new civilisation that the socialists envisage is not a picture with a materialistic overtone. The rationalist and libertarian socialist thinkers of the age realise that too much of reliance on gross materialistic values spoils the very essence and spirit of socialism. Such reliance on materialistic values necessitates concentration of economic power from which too much of robotism, statism, totalitarianism and bureaucratisation emerge as natural corollaries. In consequence the soul and substance of socialism are nullified. The modern left throughout the world, gradually discerns that the future of socialist civilisation lies not in gross materialism but in the striking of a balance between materialism and spiritualism or as Wilfred Wellock discovers in a “balanced living as between material and spiritual values”. Hence the socialism of tomorrow in order to be in consonance with the spirit of the age must be grounded on a foundation forged by the intermingling of spiritualism and materialism with a spiritual overtone.

Besides, the ultimate objective behind the egalitarian society that socialism aims at, is the creation of opportunities for each individual for the unfoldment of his individuality. Even Marx and Engels while visualising an egalitarian society, had in view blossoming of human personality that was being stifled and stultified under a system of alienation perpetrated by the separation of ownership and control from the realm of work. But blossoming of human personality does not depend solely upon one's material prosperity. With the latest technological revolutions and the speed at which it is progressing, it is not surprising that imaginatively garnered it may be able to solve the problems of hunger and starvation and raise the standard of living of the poor section of the world's population considerably during the course of the next few decades. But even in the affluent and super-affluent societies, that have succeeded in providing its members all the modern amenities that the electronic age can afford, people have started questioning whether such materialistic affluence, really fosters human development and social growth. People are getting tired of material affluence and have started looking at it cynically whether it is satisfying to the manliness in man.

Reinhold Niebuhr, the theologian, realising the bane of the industrial power and technological civilisation that "threatens to make our culture subordinate to our economy" and generates the desire for novelty that becomes a threat to the serenity of life observes that the dimension of human existence "which gives dignity to man are easily obscured and vulgarised in a culture which places undue emphasis upon living standard." Even Charles A. Lindbergh a champion of modern technology has expressed his disillusionment about the outcome of this age of technology. As he has said: "I grew up as a disciple of science. I know its fascination. I have felt the godlike power man derives from his machines . . . . Now I have lived to experience the early results of scientific materialism. I have watched pride in workmanship leave and human character decline as efficiency of production lines increased." Vance Packard critical of the affluent society of U.S.A. has equally observed, "the nation faces the hazard of developing a healthy economy within the confines of a psychologically sick and impoverished

society.”<sup>10</sup> Alberto Moravia who has dubbed the modern civilisation as “excremental” finds that the possession and consumption of superfluous wealth dehumanises man. As he says : “So production and consumption beyond what is necessary are inhuman.”<sup>11</sup>

Hence the beneficiaries of the oppulent and superaffluent societies have themselves started thinking in terms of the quality of life lived than the mere quantity of commodity consumed or as Charles A. Lindbergh has observed : “The measure of a man is his own character, not his power or wealth.” Thus the need is felt for a balanced development of human personality that takes into account, apart from his material prosperity, his ethical, spiritual, moral and religious development or creation of a whole and integrated individual and a society consisting of such individuals. Accordingly it has been said : “The crying need of today is a spiritual awakening and a ringing call to the people to rise above the dull dead materialism of a devouring economy and start the trek towards a new creative era, a civilisation of high quality with the whole man as the foundation of a virile world democracy.”<sup>12</sup>

Besides, if socialism holds out the promise of a new civilisation, it is not the socialism of the communist variety with its materialistic overtone. Civilisation according to Albert Schweitzer is essentially ethical and moral, religious and spiritual. The material development that takes place under any civilisation is not sought for its own sake but for the sake of facilitating the moral, spiritual, ethical and religious perfection of the individual. Hence according to him, for the sake of inaugurating a creative and virile civilisation, there should be reconstruction of human beings with an added emphasis on their spiritual growth. Andre Marlaux, the winner of Nehru Award for 1972 has equally felt that if the modern civilisation is in the grip of crisis and is rapidly heading towards a cataclysmic fall it can be resurrected only by the formation of man. Hence he says : “And so the task of humanity at the present moment is to find a way to form men and we know that science won’t accomplish this for us.”<sup>13</sup> If manhood of man can be formed not by science and technology or material prosperity it can certainly be done by the development of an integrated personality of the

individual with balanced development of their various faculties—religious, moral and ethical—along with their material prosperity.

The Gandhian concept of socialism that culminates in Sarvodaya or all-round welfare or integrated development of all individuals with emphasis on moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of man will certainly indicate the way for a really creative “new civilisation” of socialism of tomorrow.

Apart from the Gandhian emphasis on Sarvodaya or integrated development of all individuals, the non-violent technique for the attainment of socialism as advocated by Gandhi has not only its relevance for the socialism of tomorrow but appears to be the only rational technique that will be really productive of ample socialist dividend. Of late the merit and invincibility of the doctrine of indissoluble relationship between the end and the means and that a moral and noble end like Socialism can not be achieved by immoral and ignoble means like violence, has been realised not only by the victims and critics of the communist system, but also by persons who were at one time its high priests. If the god of communism failed miserably and the socialist values like equality, fraternity and fellowship suffered casualty in Soviet Union it is primarily due to the application of violent techniques for socialist transformation. The bureaucratic, totalitarian and “New Class” dominated system has been created in the Soviet Union and other communist countries as natural corollaries of adoption of violent technique. If individuals have been deprived of their personal freedom and individual liberty, regimentation has enveloped their social and private conduct, and freedom of thought and expression is tabooed, they are the direct concomitants of the application of violent techniques. Thus application of violent technique has done greatest violence to socialist values.

Hence the modern left (with exceptions like Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon) have discovered a great deal of irrationality in the application of the technique of violence for socialist transformation. It has realised that a socialist system bred by violence and nourished by civil war, will necessarily create a totalitarian and tyrannical system from which equality, free-

dom and socialist fraternity will have a meagre chance of emergence. Bertrand Russell, while visiting the Soviet Union a few years after the Bolshevik Revolution, in spite of his soft corner for the Bolshevik professions, and firm faith that socialism holds the prospect of a really progressive civilisation, felt that the method of violence and terror, perpetrated in Soviet Union for the sake of socialist transformation was "too rough and dangerous" and said : "I do not believe that by this method, a stable and desirable form of socialism can be established."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand he was convinced that the application of violent techniques instead of ushering in a socialist system shall generate, super-violence, terror, chaos and confusion. Accordingly he felt that socialism requires "less violence and subversiveness, more patience, and constructive propaganda, less appeal to the armed might of a determined minority . . . . It is by slower and less showy methods that the new world must be built."<sup>15</sup> Milovan Djilas has equally firmly observed that an ideal objective like socialism cannot be achieved by violence and terror.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from ideological considerations and eclipse of socialist values in the countries adopting violent technique for socialist transformation, the practicability of pursuing the socialist objective on a global scale with the help of violent techniques suffers from serious limitations. As discussed earlier, socialism of tomorrow cannot be conceived except on a global scale and with the advent of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, the prospect of attainment of socialism on a global scale with the help of violent techniques is fraught with grave possibilities. As Bertrand Russell foresaw, if a nuclear war is ever waged, it will leave no victor and no vanquished. The human species may be extinct as a result of such a war. Accordingly he said : "What makes the peculiarity of the present situation is that if a great war should break out, the belligerents on either side and the neutrals would be all equally defeated. This is a new situation and means that war can not still be used as an instrument of policy. It is true that the threat of war can still be used but only by a lunatic"<sup>17</sup>

Thus with the nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons in the armoury of major powers the technique of violence has become



too dangerous for adoption. If the technique of violence is adopted, not only the "new civilisation" of socialism will have no chance of emergence, the human civilisation may go down and the human species may be completely extinguished. Hence N. Khrushchov, a product of the system of Bolshevik violence, apprehending the dangers of nuclear and thermo-nuclear holocausts that shall be let loose as a result of capitalist-socialist conflict, discounted the application of violent technique for socialist transformation and said : "It is in the interest of the working class, of the masses, that the revolution be carried out in a peaceful way."<sup>18</sup>

Thus the Gandhian emphasis on the non-violent technique has its relevance for the socialist civilisation of tomorrow. Milovan Djilas, an inspired Communist in his early days and youth who still cherishes the vision of a socialist civilisation finds a source of inspiration in the Gandhian technique of non-violence for socialist transformation. As he writes : "The personality and life work of Gandhi show the imperishable and intransient nature of the longing for brotherhood and equity. A non-violent perfect society is not a possibility but freer and more equitable societies are."<sup>19</sup>

The Gandhian concept of a decentralised system of economy and diminution of state power and functions in the matter of socialist reconstruction, has also its relevance for the socialism of tomorrow. Socialism as a social philosophy was devised to make a healthier life possible for all individuals. It aspires to provide opportunities so that the personality of each individual gets adequate scope for its full blossoming. But the experiments undertaken in the communist bloc have belied the hopes of the socialist enthusiasts. Individuality of the members of the society instead of blossoming is getting cramped and stunted under a system of all-embracing and all-pervasive state-ownership. Identification of the social ownership of means of production, distribution and exchange meant for the sake of ensuring economic freedom of the individual so that all other freedoms would get free scope for proliferation, with state ownership, has for all practical purposes bled the individual white. Centralisation of ownership in the hands of the state generates bureaucratisation and alienation of workers

from the work-world and militates against the very spirit of socialism. The individual workers, the legal owners of the plants, factories or farms, lose their individuality and initiative in the matter of production and distribution and are reduced to the status of mere robots or machine-tenders. The centralised socialist economy controlled by the Leviathan State elevates to a dizzy height the engineers, technocrats, and bureaucrats, engenders a new type of stratification of society and creates as observed by Milovan Djilas a "New Class" that makes a mockery of the idea of a class-less society.

The full blossoming of the individual personality that is the socialist goal, therefore presupposes that the power of the state should be scuttled and the economic powers should be transferred to the real producers. The workers should not only be legal owners of the enterprises in which they work; they should be its real owners, determining and controlling its policy of production and distribution. It is being felt by the rationalist libertarian socialist thinkers of modern times that in order to make the socialist system serve the needs and interests of individuals and mirror their hopes and aspirations, there must be decentralisation of economy and reduction of the powers of the state in the matter of socialist transformation. Even Robert Dahl who does not subscribe to socialism is of opinion that individuality of man can be better secured through "smallest association" and the "alternative to a larger association includes not only a smaller association but also Autonomous Decisions". He further says : "It seems obvious that if we place much value on democracy at the work place, the present arrangement is ludicrously far from optimal. As for alternatives, self-management seems to me closer to the optimal than bureaucratic socialism or interest group management."<sup>20</sup>

Even disenchantment with the "highly centralised command economy" has already started in the Communist states of Eastern Europe that under the spell of Marxian influence and under the influence of the big brother Soviet Union were once upon a time enamoured of statism and identified socialism with absolute state ownership. Hence as Robert Kilroy Silk has appropriately observed : "Returning to Europe, to the base of socialism in Eastern Europe, we find that at the same time

as the Communist powers in the less developed countries were increasing their state powers and adopting militantly revolutionary postures, those in the developed countries of Europe were dismantling some of the props once considered to be essential features of a socialist economy and state. They are to be found dismantling the command economy.”<sup>21</sup>

In Yugoslavias, for example, for over a decade such trends are visible in the form of economic decentralisation and creation of a socialist society erected on the principle of economic pluralism. Of late there has occurred an eclipse in the economic power of the state, and democratisation of ownership and management has proceeded at the expense of centralised ownership and control. About 80% of agricultural lands are at present in the private sector.

In Hungary, the economic reform introduced in the name of “new economic mechanism” since 1968 is merely a step towards the introduction of a decentralised system of socialist economy. Authority has been delegated to enterprises in respect of their own management and operation. Besides, they have been allowed the freedom of import and export. Workers have been more effectively and intimately associated with the management of the economy. Small-scale private enterprises are also encouraged by the State.

In Poland during the sixties, steps were taken towards slackening the grip of centralised ownership and control of the economy by the state. Gomulka introduced a system of decentralisation of economy from 1969. “From now on” said Gomulka, “the plan will be built from bottom upward from the enterprises through the associations and ministries, to the Planning Commission.”

In Czechoslovakia although the attempt at liberalisation of the economy proved abortive due to Soviet intervention, the initial move initiated by Dubcek marked his passion for a system of decentralised socialist economy. Although the reformist leaders were purged, disgraced and discredited they wanted to introduce a system of humanistic communism through economic decentralisation, that encompassed more autonomy to the enterprises even to the extent of concluding contracts with foreign firms. Further it was contemplated to

associate the workers intimately with the management, and the policy of production and distribution. Moreover private enterprises were to be allowed in the sphere of handicrafts, retailing and services and more freedom was to be given to private firms.

In the light of the aforesaid developments it may well be forecast that any strategy for socialist reconstruction of the economy in order to provide a viable model for the future and fulfil the real socialists objective of full blossoming of the individual personality, must presuppose decentralisation of economic power, diminution of state control over the economy and diffusion of ownership and control so as to make the workers the real owners and controllers of the economy. Hence the Gandhian technique of decentralised system of economy with diffusion of economic enterprises in the villages, in the length and breadth of the country, and creation of smaller units of economy and control in form of self-sufficient and self-governed village republics, appear to provide the appropriate model for the socialism of tomorrow. Such a model may better promote the socio-cultural and economic needs of the socialist civilisation of tomorrow than the centralised and bureaucratised state controlled system of economy that compromises all socialist values. As Arthur E. Morgan has observed : "Just as the habit of breathing air will continue to be necessary for our physical life no matter what social or economic changes may occur, so the relationships of the small community will continue to be necessary for the basic cultural qualities of humanity."<sup>22</sup> Wilfred Wellock has very categorically observed : "The conditions by which the most cultured and capable human beings and the happiest societies may be produced are believed to exist in the Gandhian concept of Village Republics."<sup>23</sup>

The Gandhian concept of Bread Labour will also have its relevance for the socialism of tomorrow if socialism is to survive and spread and ensure a real egalitarian society. The experiments made so far in the Communist countries in the direction of creation of an egalitarian society have only succeeded in establishing a stratified society based on a novel system of privilege. The distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat has no doubt been eliminated and the system of

privilege-ridden society erected on the principle of ownership of property has no doubt been given a good-bye, but a system of society based on privilege still continues. The political and industrial bureaucracy, the party bosses and the technocrats not only enjoy better privileges and occupy higher status in the society; because of their privileged position they constitute themselves into a 'New Class', and become the centre of gravity of the entire system of polity, economy and society. Thus a system of elitism rules the roost. The society is still divided between the privileged and the under-privileged and continues to be a stratified and thus inequalitarian one. The basis of privilege and class stratification has no doubt been changed. Instead of property, power—political power of the political and party bureaucracy and economic power of the technocrats—becomes the basis of privilege and class stratification; but this change in the basis of privilege does not make the society less inequalitarian and more socialistic. This new type of vanguardism spells the death-knell of a really egalitarian society.

The Cultural Revolution that shook the socio-economic fabric of China to the root, during the late sixties, is a pointer that socialism is inconceivable within the framework of such a privilege-ridden society, whatever may be basis of the system of privilege. It simply proved that no system of elitism is reconcilable with the philosophy of an egalitarian society whether it is the elitism of the feudal lords, the bourgeois proprietors or the party intellectuals and bosses and of the technocrats. If the system of privilege enjoyed by the bureaucracy of the state, party or even the economic bureaucracy or the elite was challenged in China in the late sixties, the days are not far off when it would be challenged in the rest of the communist world. Unless the system of privilege—whatever may be its basis—goes, no truly egalitarian society is conceivable in future. The Gandhian concept of Bread Labour may provide a ready-made blue-print for solving the problem of elitism that poses a threat to the emergence of a really egalitarian society in future.

The Gandhian concept of Bread Labour cuts the very root of any system of privilege and thus indicates the way for a really egalitarian society. Broadly speaking it means three

things. It implies, (1) each must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, or as a reward for the performance of physical labour, (2) there should not be any distinction between manual labour and intellectual labour in the sense that superiority should not be attached to intellectual labour and both the categories of labour should be equally remunerated as far as possible having in view their respective reasonable absolute need, and (3) each would earn in exchange of his labour only his bread or a reasonably decent standard of living and no more. The liability of all as prescribed by Gandhi to engage themselves in physical or manual labour and earn their living in return, would eliminate the distinction between the workers and the elite and bring down all to the level of equality in respect of status. Application of the principle of equality of wage of the intellectual and manual labour-based on the criterion of respective reasonable needs of different individuals, would eliminate the social distinction based on the principle of privilege and would lend the society a genuinely egalitarian look and content. If all are paid in return for their work only what is adequate for maintaining a reasonably high standard of living consistent with the society's capacity for payment, the question of accumulation, disparity and distinction between wealth and poverty would not arise.

Thus the Gandhian concept of Bread Labour may provide a useful apparatus to the socialist strategists who would aspire to erect a society free from class stratification in future.

The Gandhian doctrine of Trusteeship of the rich has also its relevance for the socialism of tomorrow. Adoption of violent techniques in the context of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons for promoting the objective of socialism in a global scale, is fraught with such grave consequences that it pushes the rationalist socialist thinkers to the embrace of non-violent technique. But the slow rate in which the Parliamentary technique transforms the system in the direction of socialism makes many socialist enthusiasts cynical regarding attainment of socialism through Parliamentary technique. Manipulation by money bags may water-down the draft socialist measures with the help of a manufactured majority. Under the cover of a democratic system and the apparatus of an independent judi-

ciary, various subversive measures may be resorted to in order to sabotage the democratically contemplated socialist measures for equitable distribution. Besides, the administrative machinery—the bureaucracy—during the course of implementation of socialistic measures may distort the law and deform the contemplated system.

That apart as discussed earlier, socialism of the future cannot but be pursued on a global scale in order to be a really progressive force in future. But even if it is conceded that democratic machinery can be shorn of its shortcomings and the legislature, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy would act in a conscientious manner deeply inspired by . . . sociitarian conscience, it is to be acknowledged that there is no effective international authority that can implement socialist measures, on a global scale with the help of democratic and parliamentary techniques. In face of a multitude of nation-states jealously pursuing a policy of national self-aggrandisement at the expense of sister nations, inter-state jealousies, and the failure of over half a century of experiment to create a viable international authority, the prospect of pursuing socialism on a global scale with the help of non-violent democratic machinery appears to be gloomy.

Further even if it is conceded that democratic machinery can be shorn of their shortcomings and an international authority transcending national sovereignty and irrationalities of nations can be created, the problem of creation of a socialist society on a national and international scale with the help of democratic machinery would not be an easy job. Even if legislative measures are adopted both on a national and international scale for effecting egalitarian redistribution of property that may not serve the long-term interest of socialism. Socialism understood in the sense of balanced development of all individuals may not imply consumption of superfluous commodities by the individuals but it at least involves ensuring sufficiency of essential goods for all. Production of such goods on such a scale as to satisfy the rational needs of a socialist society requires, knack, tact enterprise, organising ability and imaginative exploitation of natural resources that is not equally shared by all members of the society or international

community. But unless individuals and nations with extraordinary ability and enterprise are provided adequate incentive for employment of their ability and enterprise, such ability may stagnate and the socialist society would suffer in respect of the extent of its material prosperity. For example, absolute equality in respect of distribution of national dividend among different individuals irrespective of their ability and work may sap the initiative, energy, skill and dexterity of men of superior ability. Since men of more than average or extra-ordinary ability are not given recognition in the form of payment of higher wage or remuneration they may allow their superior ability to remain unutilised or wasted leading to poverty of the nation.

In the same fashion if an effective international authority is ever created in future that stamps out inequitable distribution of wealth among nations and enforces with adequate rigidity equitable distribution of wealth and prosperity on a global scale it may ultimately lead to a state of world poverty. Natural resources are not equitably distributed among nations and so also scientific, technical and industrial know-how and managerial ability. If absolute equality in respect of sharing of wealth of the world is enforced by any world authority, the industrial, technical and scientific abilities of different nations may remain under-utilised and the natural resources may remain unexploited and unexplored, leading to a state of world poverty on a grand scale or equitable distribution of poverty. Hence even the impassioned British socialist Douglas Jay is of the opinion, that "some differentials are necessary to get abilities fully used".<sup>24</sup> But what should be the extent of differential so that it will lead to full use of individual and national abilities? That may lead to a degree of difference, irreconcilable with an egalitarian society and thus land socialism in a blind alley. The non-violent technique of persuasion and conversion of the richer individuals and nations to renounce their wealth and possession may not succeed in bringing about an egalitarian society since possession of superfluous wealth beyond what is needed for meeting one's essential needs is an instinct, difficult to shed.

The Gandhian technique of Trusteeship which comprehends



that the wealthy or the richer sections of the society can still hold their riches but use the superfluous portion for the good of the community, may solve the problems faced by the advocates of non-violent technique for socialist transformation, and for that matter the problems of socialism as a whole. If the richer sections of the society, or the richer nations of the world shed their possessiveness, if not possession, and greed for wealth if not wealth itself, and utilise their superfluous wealth for social good, socialism can be realised both in the national and global spheres without undergoing the agony of violence, blood-shed and nuclear wars.

The Gandhian concept of Trusteeship may sound utopian and unrealisable in real life. But both in individual life and national and international spheres, the significance of the concept is being gradually realised and implemented in practice. In the personal sphere, the significance of the concept has been realised by the industrial and business houses like those of the Tatas and the Birlas and Fords and Rockefellers culminating in the conversion of Scott Bader Company into *Scott Bader Commonwealth*. In the national and international spheres the significance of this concept of Trusteeship has of late been realised by the major world powers who are acting as trustees in their own way of the relatively less rich and the developing nations.

The member-nations of the U.N. have not only undertaken the responsibility of reaffirming faith in the "dignity and worth of human persons", but also to promote the "economic and social advancement of all peoples". Besides, under Article 73 of the charter they have assumed the responsibility of promoting the well-being of the non-self governing territories and their "economic, social and educational advancement". Above all, the charter has provided for one Trusteeship Council with the avowed objective of promoting "the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government."

Besides, the major powers of the world are driven willy-nilly to the position of trustees of the relatively poorer and developing nations that they consider either vulnerable from the stand-

point of the safety of the "free world" or fertile ground for the spread of communism. For example, the U.S.A. considering itself as the self appointed trustee of democratic values is spending billions of dollars every year for defending and promoting these values. On the other hand the Soviet Union considering itself as the self-appointed trustee of the socialist system is not only engaged in spreading the philosophy of socialism and communism, but also dumping tons of roubles to further the cause.

The extent of prosperity of the super-affluent powers like the U.S.A. and the ominous potentialities of the nuclear age have amply contributed to the assumption of the role of trustees by the major world powers. The super-affluent powers like the U.S.A. have attained a level of prosperity where prosperity is considered as a drag on the full blossoming of the personality of the individual. The excess of affluence has brought to the door of the average man a life of indulgence, drunkenness, debauchery, murder, moral laxity, and ethical and spiritual bankruptcy. Even the beneficiaries of the system are tired of it and are frantically in search of superior quality and higher virtues of life. As it has been observed : "In the United States where average incomes now exceed \$ 4000 per person yearly, further gains in income do not have much effect on well-being. Obtaining a second car, T.V. set or bathroom, makes a rather small contribution to well-being, compared with the first but with the rise in affluence, that now permits a third car, T.V. set etc., improvement in the quality of life is scarcely possible."<sup>25</sup>

The richer nations of the world in their anxiety to defend their prosperity and privilege against the onslaught of the hungry and starving billions of the world—who under the influence of communism not only question the privileges of the former but are also in search of opportunities to make inroads on such prosperity even through methods not short of violence,—are of course streamlining their defence system, building up military fortifications and spending tons of money in fabricating a network of world-wide defence. In the year 1970 different nations of the world spent about \$ 240 billions on defence expenditure of which the major portion was spent

by the few big powers, to defend their prosperity against the greedy look of over 200 billions of people of the world whose annual per capita income is less than \$ 100. But the big powers are gradually realising the futility of their policy and are becoming conscious that no stockpiling of I.C.B.M. and no elaborate system of nuclear weapon launching stations even in the space would act as an effective deterrent against the passion of the hungry people of the poverty-ridden nations to grab a part of their prosperity. They now believe that the most potent defensive weapon against the greedy and grabbing look and grasping postures of the poorer people of the globe is sharing prosperity with them. As Martin Luther King observed : "Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bombs or nuclear weapons . . . . . We must with affirmative action, seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity and injustice, which are the fertile soil in which the seed of communism grows and develops."<sup>26</sup>

Besides, the rationalist thinkers of the prosperous nations of the world are gradually discerning the irrationalism in the enjoyment of a large slice of natural endowments and prosperity of the world by a small segment of the total population and as Lester R. Brown expresses : "As Americans we must begin to ask ourselves what right we have to consume a third or more of the earth's resources, in our pursuit of super-affluence, though we constitute only 6 percent of its people." Being inspired by this ideology they advocate curtailment of luxuries by the people of prosperous nations and diversion of such surplus wealth for eradicating the misery of billions of people with sub-human existence. They further advocate that unless this change in the outlook of the people of the prosperous nations is effected, with the aspirations of the semi-starved people of the poverty-ridden nations of the world roused, as a result of communication revolution, there won't be the requisite atmosphere of security for the enjoyment of their opulence by the former. As Lester R. Brown says : "The United States must be willing to use its economic and scientific resources in pursuit of global social objectives; we are reaching the point in the evolution of human society where it is becoming more and more difficult to defend our pursuit of super-affluence while

much of the world still suffer from abject poverty.”<sup>27</sup>

•Gunnar Myrdal while expressing his disappointment that the richer nations of the world are not inspired by the humanitarian motivation of sacrifice for the sake of meeting the challenge of world poverty, urges upon the United States of America to undertake “international leadership” in the form of “vigorous attempts to strengthen international compassion and solidarity . . . . . for the development and welfare of the poor countries.”<sup>28</sup>

Thus the Gandhian idea of trusteeship is being accepted even by the rationalist thinkers of the developed and affluent nations themselves. In the UNCTAD Conference held in New Delhi the view was expressed that the richer nations should assume the role of trustees for the development of the poorer nations and expend their surplus resources for the promotion of this objective. Dr. Kurt Waldheim U.N. Secretary General opening the World Food Conference at Rome on November 5, 1974 urged upon the industrialised countries, to put up a sum of \$ 5 billion in the next five years for tackling the problem of global food shortage or to act almost as trustees on behalf of the starving and undernourished millions of the world.<sup>29</sup>

That the Gandhian Trusteeship idea is gradually gaining acceptance among the rationalist thinkers and humanists of the world, underlines the extent of rationalism involved in the concept. As a matter of fact in this age of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, with their potentiality to exterminate the entire human race, the technique of the richer peoples and nations acting as trustees of their superfluous wealth for the poorer peoples and nations of the world, appears to be the only sane, safe, and the scientific method of pursuing the socialist objective on a global scale. Since socialism of the future cannot but be pursued on a global scale in order to have any practical significance, Trusteeship appears to be the only rational and scientific technique for the socialism of tomorrow.

The concept of trusteeship is so much a rationalistic a doctrine that P. A. Sorokin is of the opinion that the disparity and antagonism between the multi-millionaires and the poverty-stricken people can be substantially mitigated “by making every rich person a trustee of the wealth entrusted to him rather than

an arbitrary agent in its disposition thus depriving parasitic, demoralised irresponsible heirs and heiresses of the possibility of a scandalous misuse of their riches".<sup>30</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan has equally emphatically observed : "I do think that if the kind of values in the economic field that communism believes in have to be realised, they can only be realised by some method of voluntariness which is the essence of trusteeship."<sup>31</sup>

To sum up, judged by the standard of the latest socialist trend and the prospective pattern for the future it may quite confidently be asserted that the Gandhian socialist theory not only fulfils the modern requirements, it also provides an appropriate blue-print for a new philosophical foundation and the super-structure of socialism of tomorrow. The Gandhian emphasis, on the all-round and integrated development of all individuals or Sarvodaya, the technique of non-violence, Bread Labour, and Trusteeship and above all the strategy of a decentralised system of economy with its emphasis on village self-sufficiency, are not only the appropriate solvents of the modern capitalist riddles; they hold the key to the chapel of socialism of tomorrow. Accordingly as Rammanohar Lohia has very appropriately observed : "If some of these ideas from Gandhiji's life and action can be woven into a consistent cloth of socialism, the new civilisation may emerge and mankind may hope for an age of peace and decent living."<sup>32</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru in a condolence message, broadcast over the A.I.R. to the nation on the occasion of Gandhi's assassination said : "The light has gone out, I said and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living truth."<sup>33</sup> What is true of Gandhi's message in general is equally true of his concept of socialism in particular. People with a narrow vision and a static perspective may brand him as a revivalist, a reactionary, a friend of the bourgeoisie and a defender of the privileges of the exploiters but his socialist thought has not

only certain traits of a most scientific socialist doctrine of this age; they prove its validity for ages to come. Unless mankind loses its sanity under the pressure of gross materialism, narrowness, selfishness and brutality, Gandhi's egalitarian philosophy will not only illumine the paths of socialism of tomorrow but also the faces of socialist strategists of the ages to come.

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